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ABSTRACT

The major focus of this review is on the performance of the United States Office of Education's (USOE) 10 Technical Assistance Centers (TACs). Information concerning the Technical Assistance Program, the Title I Evaluation and Reporting System (TIERS) and the methodology used for the review is also provided. Topics addressed include the selection of TAC contractors, operational policies, TAC activities, types and forms of assistance provided, support activities, staff organization, management and development, national system activities and coordination, monitoring, and costs. Various perceptions of the program held by persons affected by it or who affected it in some way are presented, including different views concerning the purpose, structure, operation and impact of this and other technical assistance systems. Alternative systems for delivering technical assistance are considered, and recommendations are made regarding the continuation, staffing, funding, and management of the system. Appendices provide information on the interviews and interviewees used in the review, a listing of related documents, an estimated breakdown of TAC effort and cost, technical issues surrounding the TAC models, characteristics of cooperating State agencies, and a background discussion about alternative systems for the delivery of technical assistance. (EB)

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PERFORMANCE REVIEW OF USOE'S ESEA

TITLE I EVALUATION TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

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PERFORMANCE REVIEW OF USOE'S ESEA

TITLE I EVALUATION TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

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Review Panel Members

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

ANCOVA	Analysis of Covariance
ANOVA	Analysis of Variance
ASPE/HEW	Assistant Secretary for Planning Evaluation of HEW
BOCES	Boards of Cooperative Educational Services
CEIS	Committee on Evaluation and Information Systems
CSSO	Chief State School Officer
ERIC	Educational Resources Information Center
ESEA	Elementary and Secondary Education Act
ETS	Educational Testing Service
FTE	Full Time Equivalent
ISA	Intermediate Service Agency
JDRP	Joint Dissemination and Review Panel
LEA	Local Education Agency
NASA	National Air and Space Agency
NCE	Normal Curve Equivalent
NCES	National Center for Education Statistics
NDEA	National Defense Education Act
NDN	National Diffusion Network
NIE	National Institute of Education
NSF	National Science Foundation
NWREL	Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory
OE	Office of Education
OED	Office of Evaluation and Dissemination
PAC	Parent and Advisory Council
PIP	Project Information Packages
SEA	State Education Agency
TAC	Technical Assistance Center
TIERS	Title I Evaluation and Reporting System
USCE	United States Council on Education
USOE	United States Office of Education

SECTION I
INTRODUCTION

1.1 HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

In 1965, Congress passed the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) to introduce the most sweeping program of Federal aid to education ever to be provided. By far, the largest program of this act was Title I; Federal assistance to local education agencies (LEAs) that have concentrations of economically disadvantaged children.[1] A significant section of Title I mandated an annual report by local districts on the effectiveness of their program in meeting the special educational needs of educationally deprived children. This mandate for evaluation and reporting was due mainly to the efforts of Senator Robert Kennedy, who was concerned that the money reach those for whom it was targeted and that LEAs be accountable to parents for the performance of the Title I Program. It is important to note that the responsibility for evaluation was assigned first to LEAs, which reported to their respective state education agencies (SEAs) which then reported to the U.S. Office of Education which reported to Congress.

This mandate for evaluation and reporting was new to all levels of the education system. Consequently, early annual reports to Congress in 1966 and 1967 amounted to nothing more than anecdotal "glossies" defending and advocating Title I. In 1968-1970, annual national surveys by USOE contractors were conducted of all districts receiving Title I funds. The data mostly described context and process characteristics of programs, and provided little basis for judging the impact of Title I.

In 1971-1972, a plan called the Belmont System was introduced to rectify many of the deficiencies of these national surveys. However, this system was never fully implemented - survey reports for 1971 and 1972 were not completed. Impact data on Title I had yet to reach Congress.

In 1972, USOE contracted with the American Institutes for Research (Wargo, et al., 1972) to reanalyze and synthesize state, and other reports of Title I evaluations covering fiscal years 1965 through 1970. Examination of state reports indicated little could be aggregated to form a national picture of Title I impact. Among the recommendations to USOE were statements of need to standardize evaluation procedures and reporting formats and need to provide technical evaluation assistance to states and, through states to LEAs.

In 1977, another report by the American Institutes for Research (McLaughlin, 1977) provided a review and synthesis of evaluations of Title I conducted during the period 1965-1975. There was little during that period that provided a satisfactory assessment of Title I impact.

---

[1]Currently, Title I is funded for over $2 billion, over one-third of the total budget for the U.S. Office of Education. The program serves roughly five million children in over 14,000 school districts in this country.

In 1974, the Educational Amendments contained legislation designed to strengthen the evaluation requirements of Title I. Section 151 called for USOE to provide SEAs with evaluation models to be used in evaluating Title I programs. These models, using objective measurements, were to provide a basis for producing comparable aggregatable data at the state and national levels. Section 151 also called for USOE to provide such technical assistance as may be necessary to the states to enable them to assist their LEAs in the implementation of this Title I evaluation system.

Efforts to respond to these Amendments were begun in June 1974. A USOE contract with RMC Research Corporation, Mountain View, California was amended to begin the development of evaluation models and a reporting System. This work was completed during 1975 and a final report, with documents to support the installation of the three models developed, was provided to USOE in 1976. Concurrent with these developments, USOE created a program for providing technical support and services to the states and LEAs. The major feature of this program is the availability of free technical services to SEAs and LEAs from 10 regional Technical Assistance Centers (TACs) established under contract to USOE in September 1976. Through the use of the evaluation and reporting system and the availability of technical assistance, it was hoped that standard impact data aggregated across LEAs for SEA reporting, and across SEAs for Federal level reporting, would be available. At the same time, it was hoped that the capacity for and quality of Title I evaluations would be enhanced both at the LEA and SEA levels.

In both 1976 and 1978, the Title I evaluation requirements were further amended. The 1976 Amendment reemphasized Congress's desire for technical assistance to be provided at the state and local levels. The 1978 Amendments contained two important changes; LEAs need evaluate only once every three years, providing that data be collected over a twelve month period and that a representative sample of LEA evaluations within each state be maintained each year.

There are several other events of historical interest. In 1978, a report on Compensatory Education (Hill, 1978) was submitted to Congress by the National Institute of Education (NIE). At this time, work is underway on addressing issues raised in connection with the technical adequacy of the evaluation models. Plans for the assistance program include continued support and emphasis upon the services provided by the Technical Assistance Centers, greater dissemination of evaluation materials, and pursuit of further documentation for the models. Concurrently, USOE is continuing to work toward the adoption of regulations for Title I evaluation during 1979.

1.2 PERFORMANCE REVIEW OF THE TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

In August 1978, USOE established the present Panel, under the direction of ASPE/HEW, "to determine whether USOE is adequately fulfilling its legislative mandate [Section 151 (e)] to provide 'technical and other

assistance' for Title I evaluations, and whether the structure and function of the program should be changed" (Charge to the Panel, p. 9, 1978). As indicated above, the major component of the assistance program, as presently constituted, is the set of 10 Technical Assistance Centers (TACs). Other components include (a) printed materials on topics associated with various aspects of Title I Evaluation and Reporting System (TIERS) and its implementation; (b) presentations at national, regional and state meetings by USOE staff; and (c) national workshops. Early analysis of the nature of the activities associated with each of the four components revealed that the documents and TACs were used to provide technical support and service. The remaining two components were employed principally to introduce and assist with the interpretation of Federal policy and to disseminate the development of the models and the reporting forms. In the overall assessment program, technical assistance is separated from policy and is seen as involving more than simple dissemination. Given the present plans emphasizing assistance, the Panel focuses the review on the two support-service components: TACs and printed materials.

Although exact cost data were not available to the Panel, it is clear that the largest portion of technical assistance effort and cost is devoted to the TAC component. Consequently, a substantial portion of the Panel's time and effort was devoted to reviewing the performance of the TAC system. No attempt was made to evaluate each, or any, individual TAC. Rather, the focus of the Panel's review was upon operations and services, with the intent of identifying possible ways to improve the TAC system, if such appeared warranted. Thus, a substantial portion of this report is devoted to discussions about the TAC component. Where data are presented for individual TACs, TACs are randomly arranged and identified by letter so as to protect their anonymity.

Initially, the Panel planned to review a representative sample of the printed materials prepared by or for USOE for national distribution and to examine their frequency of use. During the course of its work, however, the Panel learned that the documents had recently been extensively reviewed (Storlie, et al, 1978) and that most of the key documents were to be modified. Thus a review of the individual documents seemed rather moot.

The remaining sections in this report contain the methods, findings, and recommendations of the Panel. Specifically, Section II includes a description of the procedures used by the Panel in completing our review. Section III presents a portrayal of the support-service components of the assistance program. These components were the focus of our performance review. Section IV, Perceptions of the Technical Assistance Support and Services, is a compendium of the multiple perceptions of the operations and services of the support-service components obtained by the Panel. Alternative systems for delivering technical assistance are briefly described and discussed in Section V. The Panel presents its recommendations in Section VI.

Before proceeding, a brief description of the Title I Evaluation and Reporting System (TIERS) is in order. This is the system for which assistance is to be provided as set forth in Sections 151(e) and 183(e) of the 1974 and 1978 Educational Amendments.

1.3 OVERVIEW OF TIERS

The RMC Research Corporation (Mountain View) described the ESEA Title I Evaluation and Reporting System in its User's Guide (Tallmadge & Wood, 1976) as follows:

> The objective of Title I evaluation and reporting system is to provide meaningful, comparable information about Title I projects at the school building, school district, State and Federal levels. Data are collected and/or aggregated on six topics: (a) participation, (b) parent and advisory councils (PACs), (c) personnel, (d) training, (e) cost, and (f) impact.
>
> The Title I project is the basic unit of analysis, and summary information about individual projects is maintained at all levels of the system. Thus, project characteristics such as hours per week of student exposure to the project, total project hours, instructor-to-student ratio, and cost per student can be related to project gain. This feature enables the identification of promising educational practices, further investigation and possible dissemination. A *project* is conceived as a set of methods, materials, personnel, and activities that define an instructional treatment which is judged to be uniform for all those it serves. A Title I project *may* be clearly defined by the funding application, but where a single application results in the funding of several qualitatively different instructional treatments at different sites, the term project is reserved for the individual treatment and not for the funded composite.
>
> Presently, this system requires that impact data be collected only from projects serving the basic skills areas (broadly defined to include arithmetic, mathematics, reading, language arts, and communication). Any one of three basic evaluation designs may be selected for the impact assessment. These designs are: Model A, the Norm-Referenced Model; Model B, the Control Group Model; and Model C, the Special Regression Model. Further flexibility is afforded in that each design has variations to accommodate the use of either normed achievement tests (Models A1, B1, and C1) or tests for which normative data are not available (Models A2, B2, and C2). The selection of the evaluation design and the test instrument can be made at the SEA, LEA, or project levels.
>
> Regardless of the model used, cognitive achievement gains are expressed in terms of a common metric, the Normal Curve Equivalent (NCE). An NCE is a normalized standard score that has been linearly transformed to match the percentile distribution at values of 1, 50, and 99. The scale has a mean of 50 and a standard deviation of 21.06.

Once a model has been selected for use at the local project level, the required evaluation tasks generally consist of:

A. Selecting appropriate tests and students for data collection;

B. Administration of tests at appropriate times for selection, pre-testing, and post-testing;

C. Transformation of test scores into normal curve equivalent (NCE) scores;

D. Reporting NCEs to the SEA on a standard reporting form that also requires project information;

E. Reporting state data to USOE on a standard reporting form.

In most SEAs, the LEA is to use the test data in its application for funds in subsequent years. Tasks C and D also vary across states according to state preference.

SECTION II
METHODOLOGY

2.1 OVERVIEW OF INFORMATION ACQUISITION PROCEDURES

The Panel used a variety of approaches to learn about Title I evaluation in general and the delivery of technical assistance for Title I evaluation specifically. A large number of individuals are involved with and affected by Title I evaluations, for it is the largest Federal aid to education program. It was the hope of the Panel to gather the most important and most representative views possible. Table 2.1 provides an overview of information acquisition procedure and the sources of data.

Table 2.1 Methods and Sources of Data

METHODS OF DATA COLLECTION	LEA	SEA	TAC	USOE	LIBRARY
Interviews (in person or by telephone)	X	X	X	X	
Attendance at meetings		X	X	X	
NCES Survey	X				
Analysis of correspondence, logs, and other archival data			X	X	
Analysis of documents and other literature			X	X	X

2.1.1 INTERVIEWS

Each panel member completed the various interviews of respondents from each of two HEW regions. First, one or more days was spent at each of the TACs. Topics discussed included the following: needs of the region, the TAC staff (characteristics and utilization), TAC activities, relationships between the TAC and other groups, impact of the TACs, and suggestions for the future. A copy of the general discussion guide used with each TAC Director and staff is provided in Appendix A.1.

Following the TAC site visits, members of the Panel interviewed Title I SEA staff and/or evaluators from at least two states in each region. One or more key individuals in the remaining states were telephoned. Topics paralleled those discussed with the TAC staff. The interviews focused on needs

of their particular state, their experiences with the TAC for that region and with the printed materials, and their suggestions as to how technical assistance might best be delivered in the future (see State Interview Guide, Appendix A.2). Thus, when combined, the TAC and SEA data provided a comprehensive view of the technical assistance support and service within each region.

In addition, Title I evaluators from a modest number of LEAs representing large, medium and small size districts were interviewed by telephone (see LEA Guide, Appendix A.3). Personal visits were conducted with several key individuals in the Federal government and telephone interviews with a few test publishers, external evaluators, and parents were made. Further information about the number of individuals interviewed in this study is shown in Appendix B. The purpose of the interviews was to help insure that the Panel would become acquainted with most of the major concerns and issues of these groups.

2.1.2 ATTENDANCE AT MEETINGS

In addition to the interviews, one meeting of the Committee on Evaluation and Information Systems (CEIS) of the Council of Chief State School Officers and one special USOE meeting involving the CEIS were attended by Panel members. Panel members met briefly with the TAC Directors at the January 1979 quarterly Directors' meeting and at a USOE/RMC work session. These meetings were used primarily either to acquaint the participants with Panel's purpose and procedures or to listen to the participant's concerns.

2.1.3 NCES SURVEY

To provide a larger and more representative sample of LEAs than possible through telephone interviews alone, the Panel used the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES) Fast Response Survey System. The purpose of the survey form was to assess the needs for and use made of Title I evaluation technical assistance services and materials at the LEA level. At the time this report was written, however, the survey had not been completed. The results, therefore, are expected to be presented in an Addendum to this report.

2.1.4 ANALYSIS OF CORRESPONDENCE, LOGS, AND OTHER ARCHIVAL DATA

The Panel assembled and read a large number of documents related to the operation of the TACs. (E.g., Initial Request for Proposals for TAC operations; TAC Annual and Quarterly Reports; workshops, on-site consultations, and telephone logs; reports prepared by USOE staff; Letters-of-Agreement between states and its TACs; letters between Congress and USOE staff.) These provided further insight into the intent of the assistance program and how it was actually being operated.

2.1.5 ANALYSIS OF DOCUMENTS AND OTHER LITERATURE

In addition to the material described above, several reports particularly germane to Title I evaluation were identified and read. A selective listing of these appears in Appendix C.

It is perhaps instructive to mention some important ways in which the activities of the Panel differed from those originally intended. The Panel initially planned to visit ten states (one in each HEW region) and interview the rest by telephone. As mentioned above, representatives from over 20 states were interviewed personally, with telephone contact made with representatives from the remaining states. The reason for the change was due, primarily, to the fact that we observed great variation among the states with respect to their needs and attitudes about technical assistance. We were apprehensive of making improper generalizations had only a smaller number of states been visited.

Originally, each TAC was to be visited twice. The amount of information received during the initial visits and the open and frank discussions at that time, however, convinced the Panel that the potential benefits of a second visit would not be sufficient to justify a return trip.

Initially, the Panel had planned to review the Title I technical assistance documents prepared by the Office of Evaluation and Dissemination, USOE or by groups under contract to them. But, as mentioned in Section I, the documents had recently undergone a thorough review (Storlie, 1978), and most of the key ones were expected to be modified. Thus, a careful review by the Panel of such features of the documents as their authoritativeness, presentation, format, and comprehensibility/readibility seemed moot.

Another change had to do with the planned cost analysis of the technical assistance operation. Because of the lack of detailed cost information, it was possible to perform only a very limited cost analysis.

Two items we were not charged to do should be mentioned. First, as stated in Section I, the Panel did not conduct an evaluation of individual TACs; we focused on the TACs as a system for delivering technical assistance. Second, it was not a charge of this Panel to evaluate the technical adequacy of the TIERS developed pursuant to Section 151 of the 1974 Educational Amendments.

Finally, it should be recognized that all interviews took place in a situation of "expanding and unlimited availablity" of technical assistance to SEAs and LEAs. Whether or not the same information and data would have been collected if the system were more "closed", with problems attendant when "demands exceed supply", cannot be ascertained with clarity.

SECTION III

PORTRAYAL OF THE TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE SUPPORT AND SERVICES

3.1 REGIONAL TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE CENTERS

Technical Assistance Centers were established by USOE for the purpose of assisting states and, at the discretion of the states, local districts, in the implementation of the ESEA Title I Evaluation and Reporting System. As noted in Section I, previous efforts to use SEA or LEA Title I evaluation data at the Federal level revealed a lack of uniformity in both the (1) approach and (2) quality of these evaluations. The intent of TIERS is to correct the first of these two problems. Correspondingly, to eliminate the second, the function of the TACs is to improve, through training and consultation, the local capability for performing Title I evaluation.

Thus far, technical assistance has been provided mainly for evaluation of grades 2-12 reading and mathematics Title I programs, with particular attention focused upon the evaluation models and reporting forms included in the Title I evaluation system. Training consists primarily of workshops requested by the SEA and, in some states, by an intermediate education service unit or LEA. Consultation, which may occur on-site, over the telephone, or in written correspondence, is provided to facilitate the actual implementation of one or more of the components of TIERS in site-specific situations. All assistance is provided free-of-charge to SEAs or LEAs.

3.1.1 SELECTION OF TAC CONTRACTORS

The Centers are operated by independent, non-government contractors and are administered by the Office of Evaluation and Dissemination (OED)[1] USOE. These agencies were selected through regular Federal competitive procurement procedures. Ten separate competitions were held, one for each HEW Regional Area. Agencies could, however, submit proposals for more than one region. Altogether 55 proposals were received.

It was believed - and still is - that each TAC staff should be familiar with the programs and operational procedures of the SEAs within the region they would serve. Accordingly, 40 percent of the technical selection points were devoted to regional knowledge and experience (e.g., successful experience with SEA/LEA personnel, particularly with Title I and/or compensatory education evaluation). During the screening process for each region, Title I evaluation and program staff in all states were contacted to assess the regional expertise of each finalist.[2] Further,

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[1]Formerly Office of Planning, Budgeting and Evaluation (OPBE).

[2]Personal communication, Dr. Ronald Fishbein, Project Officer, Technical Assistance Centers, OED, USOE, December 7, 1978.

"in almost all cases, an SEA representative from within the region (usually the state with the largest Title I funding) and a representative from the HEW regional office were present during negotiations to question offerors on their knowledge of regional programs" (Evans, 1978, p. 19).

The remaining technical selection points were distributed as follows: technical and managerial qualifications of proposed project director - 14; technical qualifications of proposed staff - 29; understanding of the objectives of the project and the approach used to meet the objectives - 10; general corporate experience - 3; and proposed plan for training personnel - 4. The selected TACs together with the states in each region are listed in Table 3.1.

The first contracts, effective September 30, 1976, were for 15 months, with option to extend the term. Following OED contact with most of the SEAs to check acceptability, all options were granted. The contracts are to be further extended through September 1979 to allow consideration of the findings of this review prior to preparing the Request for Proposals for the next required (by Federal procurement regulations) round of competitive bidding.

3.1.2 OPERATIONAL POLICIES

Figure 3.1 illustrates the relationships among OED (USOE), SEAs, LEAs, and TAC. Administratively responsible to OED, the Centers serve, upon request of a state agency, the state, intermediate, and/or local Title I offices. This service, in the form of technical assistance for

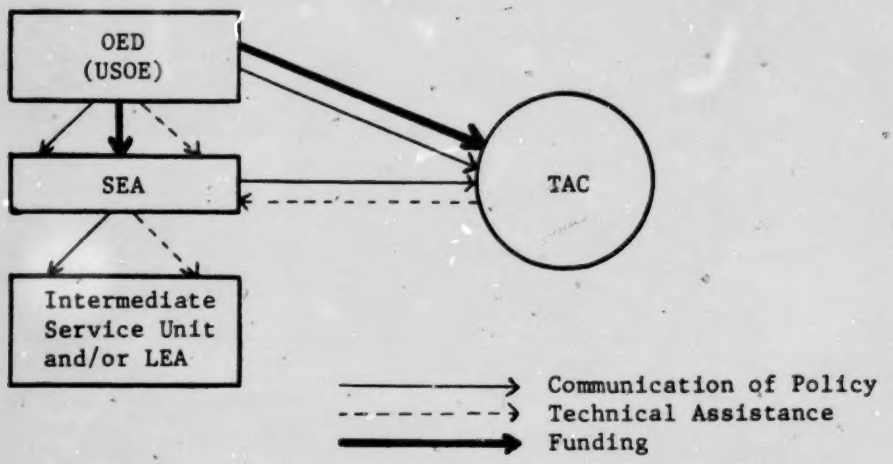

Figure 3.1 Parties Active in Implementation of TIERS

Table 3.1 Title I Evaluation Regional Technical Assistance Centers and Member States

HEW Region	TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE CENTER	MEMBER STATES
I	RMC Research Corporation Portsmouth, New Hampshire	Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Vermont
	Curriculum Research & Development Center, University of Rhode Island Kingston, Rhode Island (Subcontract to RMC)	Connecticut, Rhode Island
II	Educational Testing Service Princeton, New Jersey	New York, New Jersey, Puerto Rico, Virgin Islands
III	NTS Research Corporation Durham, North Carolina	Delaware, Maryland, Pennsylvania, Virginia, West Virginia, District of Columbia
IV	Educational Testing Service Southern Regional Office Atlanta, Georgia	Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee
V	Educational Testing Service Midwest Regional Office Evanston, Illinois	Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, Ohio, Wisconsin
VI	Resource Development Institute, Inc. Austin, Texas	Arkansas, Louisiana, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Texas
VII	American Institutes for Research Palo Alto, California	Iowa, Kansas, Missouri, Nebraska
VIII	Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory Portland, Oregon	Colorado, Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, Utah, Wyoming
IX	Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory Portland, Oregon	Arizona, California, Hawaii, Nevada, Guam, Trust Territory of Pacific Island, American Samoa
X	Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory Portland, Oregon	Alaska, Idaho, Oregon, Washington

Title I evaluation, is provided free-of-charge; all costs associated with the operation of the TACs are borne by the Federal government. To help allay fears of Federal encroachment and to encourage the view that TACs are a helping source, TAC staff are prohibited from (1) conducting evaluations or any part thereof, (2) recommending specific tests, (3) advising on curriculum and programming, (4) representing state policy to local districts, and (5) enforcing, interpreting, or advising on USOE policy.

The first efforts of each TAC were focused upon protocol and identification of the assistance needs in each of its states. An introductory letter explaining the availability of the TAC was sent by USOE to each of the Chief State School Officers (CSSO). This first contact was followed by a telephone call and/or letter from the TAC Director to each CSSO explaining more fully the nature of the TAC contract and the services available. At the same time, an on-site meeting was requested to formalize, in a Letter-of-Agreement, the specific services to be provided and the procedures to be followed. When compared across states and from one TAC to another, the negotiated Letters-of-Agreement have many similarities:

A. A general statement recognizing the availability of technical assistance from the TAC;

B. Identification of the designated contact person at the state level who would represent the state and through whom the TAC would clear information and activities;

C. Delineation of the types of assistance to be provided and not to be provided by the TAC;

D. A description of the methods/procedures the TAC would use in receiving and responding to requests from local districts; and

E. A statement requesting the general need for ongoing TAC consultations as the state progresses further in their implementation of TIERS.

With the exception of the Trust Territory and Samoa, Letters-of-Agreement were negotiated and signed within the first six months of the beginning of the contract period. TAC Directors attributed the variation in time taken to reach agreement with the states to several factors:

- many were not aware exactly of what kinds of assistance they wanted;
- a few requested topics that went beyond the permitted focus of the TACs;
- a few wanted to proceed slowly in order to better ascertain the impact of TIERS upon themselves and their LEAs (skeptical of Federal involvement; initial adverse reaction to original USOE-RMC national workshops);

- o a small number felt that, given the size and/or expertise of their own external consultants, technical assistance was not necessary; and
- o for some, it was a matter of finding a convenient time to meet, given the tight schedule of the responsible SEA personnel.

TAC Directors, cognizant of these factors, were both responsive and responsible in negotiating the Letters-of-Agreements; no complaints from SEAs were received by the Panel.

TAC Directors and staff, though, expressed some concern about the variation that existed among the states, although they did point out that comparability of frequency and kind of request among states generally has increased. These differences are attributable in the main to one or a combination of the first four reasons listed above.

As might be expected, the nature and frequency of requests as well as the procedures to be employed changed across time (e.g., direct LEA contact by a TAC was initially disallowed by some SEAs who now permit it). At the beginning of the second contract period, three TAC Directors renegotiated the Letters-of-Agreement with their states to better reflect these changes. For the remaining TACs, the initial Letters were considered satisfactory.

3.1.3 TAC ACTIVITIES

As described in the initial Request for Proposals, TAC activities are organized around seven interrelated functions: technical assistance service, outreach, staff development, national system activity, national coordination, SEA workshops, and regional meetings of State Title I Coordinators. The percentage of person-days spent on each of the first five functions is summarized in Table 3.2 for five TACs for the January-March, April-June, and July-September 1978 quarters. It should be noted that these figures do not include time spent on management and recruitment nor the time of non-professional support staff. The other two functions - SEA workshops and regional meetings of State Title I Coordinators - are not listed, since for these five TACs, apparently no time was spent on either.

Comparable data were not readily available for the remaining five TACs. Information and data obtained from the Panel's interviews of Directors and staffs of these TACs and from the descriptions of activities contained in their Quarterly Reports for the corresponding quarters suggest that the percentage distributions for these Centers would not differ substantially from those shown in Table 3.2.

Table 3.2 Percentage Distribution of Technical Assistance Person Days by Function

1. January-March 1978
2. April-June 1978
3. July-September 1978

Center:	A			B			D			G			I		
Period:	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3
Technical Assistance	*	92.8	95.0	93.1	91.3	97.1	82.8	89.9	79.8	88.2	89.8	83.7	91.9	90.5	95.4
Outreach		0.6	1.3	1.5	0.9	1.2	3.0	1.6	5.4	1.1	0.8	1.6	2.3	1.5	1.2
Staff Development		4.7	2.9	0.3	6.1	0.1	7.1	6.0	8.4	2.7	8.5	3.5	0.7	8.0	1.7
National System Activity		1.7	0.5	1.0	1.7	0.4	4.4	1.4	2.7	2.0	0.8	0.6	0.8	0.0	0.6
National Coordination		0.2	0.2	4.1	0.0	1.1	2.7	1.3	3.4	6.1	0.0	0.0	4.3	0.0	1.1

*Not readily available for this quarter.

3.1.3.1 TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE SERVICE

As described above, the primary function of the *Technical Assistance* Centers is to provide *technical assistance*. All TACs spend by far the greatest proportion of their time in this area.

3.1.3.1.1 Assistance Provided

The expected flow of data in TIERS is shown in Figure 3.2. The Roman numerals denote the major phases of the evaluation system: selection of a model; selection/administration of tests; scoring; score conversion; data analysis; and data aggregation (see Anderson, et al., 1978, pp. 22-25). During the January-September 1978 period, the assistance most often sought and provided corresponded closely to the six phases of TIERS:

- o general orientation (the nature of TIERS; characteristics of the models)
- o selection of a model (most often Model A)
- o testing (criteria for test selection, out-of-level testing, use of pretest for screening)
- o NCE conversion and interpretation
- o reporting (design and completion of state reporting forms)
- o data analysis (statistics, use of hand-held calculators and/or computers)

Because of the large amount of staff turnover at the local level and in view of the forthcoming Title I regulations, TAC staffs believe that the same level of effort will be required in these areas for the next few years.[3] Further, the TAC staffs foresee needs for assistance in data utilization and quality control (adherence to testing dates, and accuracy in completing forms, score conversions, data analysis, and data aggregation). Such assistance has already been provided, especially in states and LEAs which have completed an evaluation using TIERS.

While assistance has been focused for the most part on the implementation of TIERS, TAC staff have, upon request, provided help on evaluation of other Title I programs (e.g., Migrant; Neglected and Delinquent; Early Childhood). Aid has been given to LEAs in preparing Joint Dissemination and Review Panel (JDRP) submissions (under Sections 151(h) and 183(h) of the 1974 and 1978 Educational Amendments) and, recently, to states awarded "state refinement" contracts (under Sections 151(c) and 183(c) of the '74 and '78 Amendments). Requests have

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[3]State officials, while agreeing assistance in these areas is still needed, were divided as to the length of time required; most believed that the TACs would be needed for an additional two to five years.

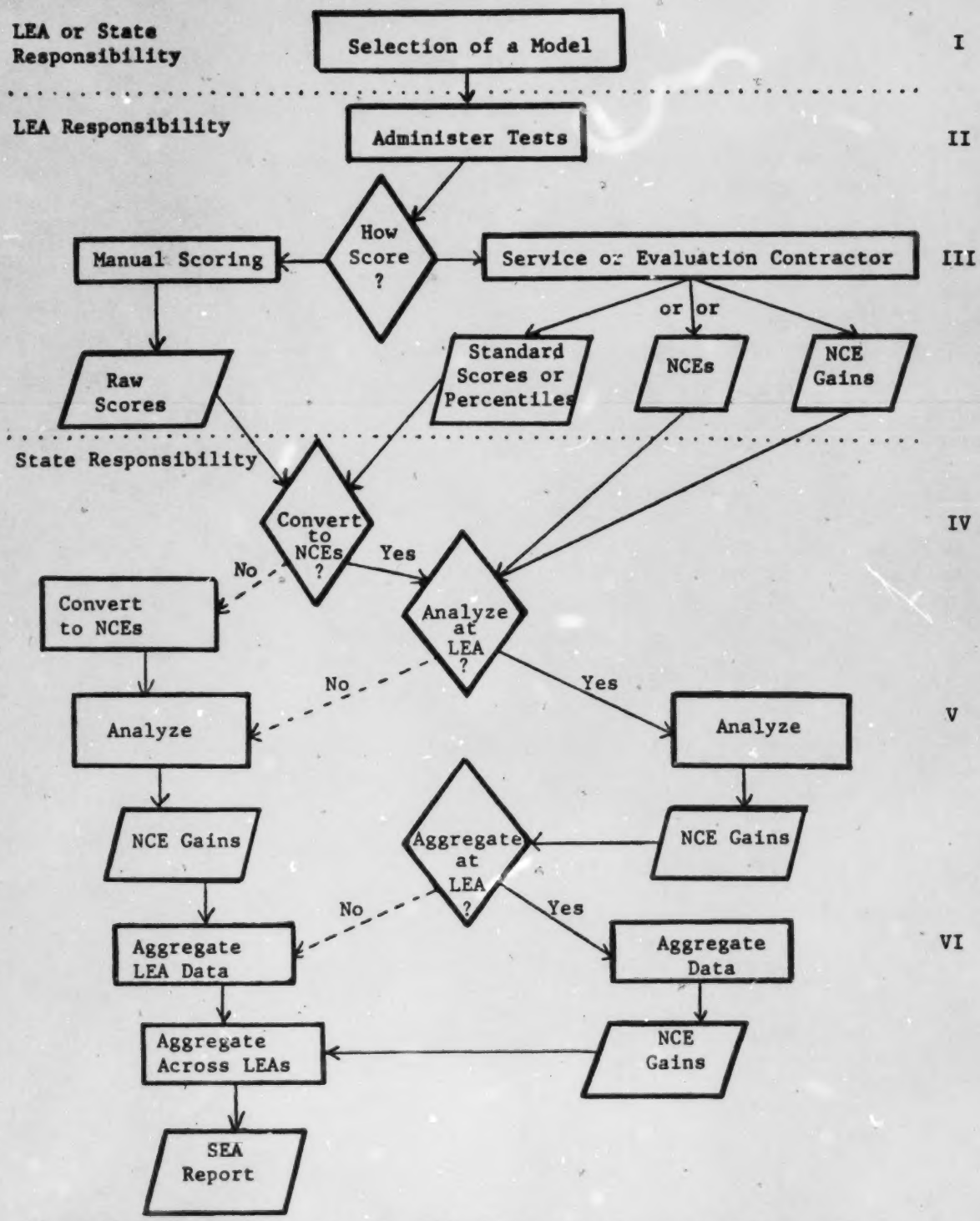

Figure 3.2 Flow of Data in the ESEA Title I Evaluation and Reporting System (Adapted from Anderson et al, 1978, p. 24)

also been received for help in carrying out Title I process evaluations and evaluations in general. These requests do not come from all states; most frequently they are received from states and districts further along in their implementation of TIERS and which wish to do more than what is encompassed in the present evaluation system. A pervasive view among these people is that TIERS is more summative in nature, but that formative evaluation is needed. While most TACs appear willing to attend to these broader evaluation issues at this time, some feel that such moves may be premature. They argue that the present TIERS should be implemented fully and properly first.

3.1.3.1.2 Forms of Delivering Assistance

It is important to note the obvious: technical assistance must be delivered in a manner commensurate with the expertise of the recipient. The vast majority of "Title I evaluators" at the local level have limited knowledge about, experience in, and/or time for Title I evaluation; only a small number of districts have a Title I or general evaluation unit. Similarly, in several states, the State Title I evaluator has only limited experience and training in evaluation; often this person has other duties to perform in addition to evaluation. Consequently, TAC staff devote a substantial portion of their time and effort to planning ways to effectively match assistance to the needs of their clients.

Four delivery forms are used: orientation and implementation workshops, on-site consultations, telephone consultations and written consultations. Orientation workshops are used to present an overview of the components of TIERS and usually a description of the models. Implementation or training workshops are used to deal with more specific components of the evaluation system, and often include practice excercises. On-site, telephone, and written consultations generally occur after the client has attended a workshop. Telephone consultations are used for quick clarifications (e.g., appropriateness of a testing date or possible change of a test), while written assistance generally involves providing printed materials prepared by the TAC staff. In contrast, on-site visits are used for more difficult issues (e.g., criteria for test selection). Through on-site consultations and implementation workshops, staff members feel they gain a greater understanding and appreciation of particular projects and situations, thereby allowing them to provide more relevant assistance at a level commensurate with the evaluation background of their clients.

Workshops may be attended by one or two representatives from several LEAs or by several staff members (teachers, principals, district staff) from a single LEA. On-site consultations may occur with a small group (usually no more than four people) or an individual. Most often workshops are conducted jointly with the State Title I evaluator, so that both technical and policy issues may be addressed. In some instances, state policy requires the state evaluator to conduct the workshops, with the TAC providing assistance only upon request.

An indication of the *approximate* number of workshops, on-site consultations, and telephone contacts is provided in Table 3.3 for seven TACs. These data were derived from the three Quarterly Reports corresponding to January-September 1978. It should be noted that these seven TACs reported their information in different ways (e.g., narrative form; listings; tabulations). Consequently, two independent tabulations were made for the second quarter. Despite differences in procedure that crept in, the separate tabulations essentially corroborate each other. Nevertheless, given the lack of uniform reporting among the TACs (indeed, necessary data to complete Table 3.3 were not available from three TACs), the Panel feels that one can only form general impressions.

As anticipated, there are differences among the TACs in the number of workshops and consultations they provide to SEAs and LEAs. The differences, though, are greater than what one might expect. If we accept the initial allocation of person-months to TACs presented in the Request for Proposals as reflective of the similarity expected, then TACs D, H, and J, for example, should be comparable; they are not. A major part of this discrepancy is attributable to the inter-state variability acknowledged in Section II of this report. There are obvious differences in the amount of assistance requested by individual SEAs and, within SEAs, by intermediate units (where they exist) and local districts. Some of these differences can be ascribed to the view held by certain states toward their need for technical assistance, the technical adequacy of the models, and/or the involvement of the Federal government in what they perceive as the state's jurisdiction. Other reasons include the extent to which TIERS has been implemented and the way in which the evaluation work is divided between the state and local offices. As shown in Figure 3.2 completion of some of the evaluation tasks is the sole responsibility of the local districts, others the responsibility of the state, while others may be completed by either. How these latter tasks are divided in part determines the amount of assistance requested at each level. It should be noted that all of these factors are beyond the control of the TACs.

For 1978, there was a general tendency for the number of personal contacts (workshops, on-site consultations) to drop during the summer (July-September) quarter, particularly at the local level. Of the three quarters shown, the spring (April-June) quarter appears to be the peak service period. TAC Directors and staff indicated that their peak service periods are in the fall and spring, corresponding approximately to the testing (fall, spring) and reporting (spring LEA to SEA; fall SEA to USOE) phases of TIERS. It is anticipated that there will be a further increase in the fall activity and, perhaps, winter activity due to requests in the areas of quality control and, to a lesser extent, data utilization.

Although there was a large number of telephone contacts between SEAs and LEAs and their TAC, slightly less than half (47 percent) involved technical issues. The remaining calls were devoted to planning for workshops and on-site visits.

Table 3.3 Approximate Numbers of Workshops, On-site Consultations, and Telephone Contacts

1. January-March 1978
2. April-June 1978
3. July-September 1978

Technical Assistance Center:	A			B			D			G			H			I			J		
Period:	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3
Workshop	28	79	21	7	15	33	17	21	9	5	24	4	22	24	2	6	9	8	18	17	0
On-site Consultation SEA	7	7	23	4	3	2	6	6	8	4	4	8	0	3	3	2	5	4	3	12	8
On-site Consultation LEA	65	125	61	28	44	0	27	33	14	1	2	3	4	8	9	2	10	3	18	6	21
Telephone Assistance *	370	638	503	31	20	36	49	118	79	30	39	31	7	30	25	19	40	22	32	36	73
Telephone Planning *				64	59	75	67	122	81	20	31	38	4	6	10	42	37	25	17	48	47

Note: These data were derived from the Quarterly Reports corresponding to the three quarters indicated. Since the information was not presented in a consistent form among the TACs, the data may not reflect exactly what the authors of the reports intended. Nevertheless, the Panel believes the data provide a basis for forming general impressions about the use of the three forms of contact.

*For TAC A, telephone contacts for assistance and contacts for planning could not be differentiated.

3.1.3.1.3 Support Activities

TACs report spending considerable time and effort preparing support materials to use in conjunction with their workshops and personal (on-site, telephone, written) consultations. Materials produced include topical papers (e.g., out-of-level testing); simulation exercises (e.g., test selection; reporting forms completion); checklists (for implementing a particular model); handouts (e.g., test charts); and transparencies for use with an overhead projector. Materials with greater generality (e.g., information on handheld calculators) are shared among TACs, but for the most part TACs develop their own materials. Staff members believe this is desirable, and point out that such an approach permits greater flexibility to meet regional, state, and local needs.

Beginning with the spring 1978 quarter and based on the experience of the previous year, several TACs began to revise previously developed workshops and support materials. Unlike the initial developmental work, this recent work appears to be more systematic. Several TACs, for example, have either added a media person to their own staffs or begun to use media personnel within their own agency. Additionally, more time appears to be available now for completing this work than was available during the previous year. TAC staff commented that, until additional staff were added, they were "too busy" working in the field; thus development of supporting materials was slighted.

3.1.3.2 OUTREACH

As initially conceptualized, outreach included TAC activities designed to make states aware of the availability of technical assistance services. This initial work culminated with the signing of the Letters-of-Agreement. As now employed, outreach includes those activities designed to keep state officials aware of the continued availability of technical assistance. Common methods for performing this proportionately small function (see Table 3.2) include a Regional Coordinating Council meeting (seven TACs), scheduled meetings with state contacts on an individual or group basis (six TACs), and distribution of a regional newsletter (five TACs).

3.1.3.3 STAFF DEVELOPMENT

Next to technical assistance service, staff development consumes the next highest percentage of TAC person-day effort. However, in comparison, this percentage is small, accounting for less than 10 percent of the time in any one quarter (Table 3.2). Of this amount, the greater portion is devoted to training new staff. The remainder is spent on staff maintenance.

Pre-service training of TAC staff is conducted separately by each TAC. Emphasis is placed on training sessions designed to familiarize staff with specific materials and procedures used in workshops and on-site consultations. New staff are usually then paired with seasoned staff in the form of an internship of undetermined length. There appears to be no formal training on the substance of the technical assistance. New staff are expected to acquire knowledge about the evaluation models and reporting systems from reading available documents (usually the RMC materials) and from informal discussions with senior staff.

Although TAC members recently received training in the use of programmable calculators to assist in the analysis of Title I data, in-service training is usually directed toward improving workshop and consultation skills (e.g., conflict resolution, needs-satisfaction, presentation skills, workshop development). There appears to be little formal in-service work pertaining specifically to the evaluation models and reporting systems.

Some TAC Directors and staff members expressed concern about the lack of attention given to the development and maintenance of staff, particularly with reference to the technical issues related to the evaluation models and reporting systems. It was continually pointed out that, given the "out-of-the-office" nature of the technical assistance system, it was difficult to schedule training sessions that all staff could attend. They further pointed out that new staff were usually hired one at a time in response to the need as it arises in the field. There was, however, only limited support for a centralized training facility.

3.1.3.4 NATIONAL SYSTEM ACTIVITY

The fourth function of the TACs is to complete special "national" (i.e., inter-regional) tasks determined by the USOE Project Officer. The tasks are commonly related to problems encountered in the implementation of TIERS. Ad hoc, inter-TAC committees established by the Project Officer in consultation with the TAC Directors are used to complete the necessary work. Each committee is usually chaired by one of the TAC Directors, and includes members selected from among the TAC staffs. Outside consultants are used on occasion (e.g., Model A Technical Committee). Committees operating during January-September 1978 were the Model A Technical Committee, the Model C Technical Committee, the Rasch Planning Committee, the RMC Materials Review Committee, and the Test Publishers Committee. As seen in Table 3.2, the percentage of time reportedly spent on national system activity was not very great.

3.1.3.5 NATIONAL COORDINATION

Coordination among the TACs is maintained chiefly through Directors' meetings. Held quarterly, these meetings are hosted by the TACs on a rotational basis and last for two and one-half days. The agenda

typically includes (a) presentation of regional updates, consisting of a brief summary of the work completed during the last quarter and plans for the future; (b) discussion of technical issues, including technical committee reports and progress reports on the development of suitable evaluation models for other (e.g., Early Childhood, Migrant) Title I programs; (c) presentation of a legislative update or the "Washington Report"; and (d) interpretation of policy. Often new materials developed by individual TACs are distributed for review and comment. Each meeting is chaired by the Project Officer and is attended by appropriate USOE officials (depending on the particular agenda topics) and representatives from RMC Research Corporation, the technical issues contractor. TAC staff members attend only when requested.

TAC Directors predictably have mixed views about the usefulness of these meetings. Some indicate that the regional updates are of limited utility, while others find them useful; some express displeasure with the time devoted to technical issues, others find this part of the meeting most interesting. All agree on the utility of the legislative update and interpretation of policy.

Additional coordination is fostered by the inter-TAC committees described earlier and through the sharing of materials.

Generally, there seems to be a good working relationship among the TACs. There are, though, some undercurrents of dissatisfaction and concern that one usually finds in any project. Some Directors wondered aloud about the differences in services provided among the TACs. Staff members at seven Centers expressed a desire to be more actively involved at the national level, either through greater participation at Directors' meeting or through some form of national TAC conference. Individual TACs are beginning to copyright materials, which may interfere with the here-to-fore free sharing. Finally, there is a small but uneasy feeling that inevitably arises any time incumbents face a new round of competitive bidding.

3.1.4 STAFF, ORGANIZATION AND MANAGEMENT

3.1.4.1 STAFF

The following criteria, contained in the Request for Proposal, have been employed for the most part when hiring TAC staff:

- o interpersonal skills, particularly in dealing with LEA and SEA personnel;
- o expertise in educational evaluation, experimental design, testing, and sampling;
- o expertise in providing consulting services of an instructional nature, whereby the client is able to perform the required tasks at the completion of the consultations;

- o familiarity with currently available nationally standardized achievement tests and their applicability to compensatory educational evaluation;
- o familiarity with the theory and use of criterion-referenced tests and their application to educational evaluation;
- o familiarity or willingness to become familiar with commonly available computer programs employing ANOVA, ANCOVA, and the univariate general linear model (regression analysis); and
- o concern for the problems of the educationally disadvantaged.

Not surprisingly, the modal educational background of TAC staff members is a doctorate in Education. The majority have specialized in measurement, statistics, and evaluation. There was some support for adding curriculum specialists to complement the present quantitative focus. As noted above, several TACs have hired or begun to use media personnel within their own agency to help revise and develop materials.

Across the TACs, there appears to be a blend of seasoned evaluators and "new" graduates. Many have had previous experience in the field, usually in evaluation. Often, this experience has been gained in the region served by the TAC, thereby enhancing the image important to gain the confidence and trust of some state and local Title I personnel.

There was some feeling among Directors that staff members are perhaps somewhat overqualified for many of the activities they are asked to do. Graduate students have been employed by two TACs to handle many of the telephone consultations and to assist with workshops. Justifications advanced in support of highly trained staff were: (1) the Title I evaluation system is a technically complex, evolving system and, (2) some small, but nevertheless important percent of the questions from the field could not be handled satisfactorily by less trained staff.

A few TAC Directors commented about the apparent advantages related to cost-of-living factors some TACs can enjoy over others when competing for new staff. To the extent this is real and to the extent salaries are required to be comparable among TACs, allowances should be adjusted to correct for factors beyond the control of a TAC.

Staff members are generally enthusiastic and pleased with their work in the field. They feel that their work is well received. With one or two exceptions, they describe their relationships with SEAs and LEAs favorably. There is, however, one area of some concern: their lack of involvement in research and development related to Title I evaluation. There is general agreement among TAC staffs that across the Centers there are many competent, well-trained researchers. They argue that, because they are close to the questions inherent to the application and use of TIERS, they are in a unique position to search out and evaluate the answers. They do agree, however, that TACs are primarily service organizations and only secondarily research and development units.

3.1.4.2 ORGANIZATION AND MANAGEMENT

Staff deployment follows two basic patterns. In the first, one staff member is responsible for a specific state; in the second, staff are assigned to the region, i.e., not to states. There appears to be no distinct advantage of one assignment pattern over the other. The state coordinator model, in which each state has its own "assistor", avoids confusion that may arise when the SEA or an LEA within the state wants to request assistance; i.e., there is a constant TAC contact. Coordinators identify with their state; they feel that by concentrating on one state, they are better able to attend to the unique needs and personnel of their state. Regional assignment avoids the problems that arise when staff members leave and allows staff to work in their specific areas of expertise (for example, testing versus data analysis by hand or by computer, or conducting workshops versus on-site consultation).

Each TAC is headed by a Director; seven have "Assistant" Directors. Directors (and Assistant Directors) are responsible for the overall management of their TACs, including coordination of regional activities, national coordination among TACs, coordination with USOE, recruitment, and preparation of Quarterly Reports. Below the administrative level, the staff organization appears to be horizontal.

Data on time spent on management was reported in the Quarterly Reports of four TACs. The percentage of time spent on management (not part of the data in Table 3.2) varied from 3 to 13 percent across the three quarters, January-September 1978. Unfortunately the lack of an accompanying narrative prevented any analysis of the differences observed.

3.1.5 FEDERAL MANAGEMENT

The TACs are administratively a part of OED (see Figure 3.1), and managed by a full-time Project Officer and two half-time Assistants. The Project Officer oversees the overall operation of the TAC system. Each Assistant is responsible for five TACs; their additional assignments are related to other aspects of the Title I evaluation program (e.g., Title I Early Childhood evaluation, "state refinement" contracts). Besides the monitoring functions usually associated with the administration of a Federal program, the Project Officer and Assistants are responsible for all policy activity. The Project Officer is responsible for all contractual matters, and approves the hiring of all additional TAC staff.

3.1.5.1 MONITORING

The Project Officer and Assistants indicated that their monitoring was of an informal nature, built upon a trust. They all attend the Directors' meetings where they receive regional updates reported orally by the TAC Directors. Additionally, they receive written Quarterly Reports, and they have frequent telephone contact with the TACs. Based on data from three TACs, there is an average of 20 calls per quarter.

The TAC Directors find this system to their liking, but the Project Officer expressed concern about the variation among the Reports. In monitoring programs of this size, it is usual practice for the Project Officer to receive progress reports containing sufficient data to make possible a quick review of the level of effort, including costs, for each of the major tasks. However, as alluded to in earlier parts of this section, this is not occurring in the present program.

Table 3.4 summarizes the categories of information identified by the Panel and found in the TAC Quarterly Reports, January-September 1978. In this table, a "-" represents no information that can be used to fill a system-wide effort matrix; an "A" represents an aggregated reference (e.g., "Several workshops were held this quarter in_____"); an "N" represents a fairly specific narrative reference that can be tabulated after careful reading; an "L" represents presentation of activities in a list; and a "T" represents tabulation of the activities in the Reports. Clearly, the present Reports, taken as a whole, do not conform to more detailed reporting systems.

3.1.5.2 POLICY ACTIVITY

As mentioned earlier, TAC staff are prohibited from enforcing, interpreting, or advising on USOE policy. Instead, policy matters are the responsibility of the Project Officer and Assistants. Consequently, part of their time is spent visiting SEAs, attending meetings of TAC regional councils (where they exist), and occasionally participating in TAC workshops.

The separation of policy interpretation and implementation from technical assistance on evaluation appears to be desirable. USOE did not want the TACs to be perceived in the field as an extended arm of OE. TAC Directors and staff and most SEA officials agreed they were not, citing their lack of any compliance role as the principal reason. There was agreement among the groups that had the TACs been given a policy role in addition to their role in technical assistance, they would not have been received as positively as they have been.

3.1.6 COST[4]

Expenditures for the first 15 month period amounted to approximately 1.95 million dollars; for the second 15 month period (January through March 1979), the cost is expected to be slightly more than 6.8 million dollars. The increase observed (approximately 3.5 fold) reflects the growth in the number of requests for assistance, necessitating the hiring of additional TAC staff. Taken together, the funds of the two contract periods amount to 39 percent of OED Title I Evaluation budget set aside. The estimated funds needed to extend the current contracts through September 1979 is approximately 1.84 million dollars.

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[4]The cost information presented in this subsection was contained in a letter from the Project Officer, Technical Assistance Centers, OED, to the Project Officer, Technical Assistance Review Panel, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation, January 17, 1979.

Table 3.4 Summary of Reporting Categories in TAC Quarterly Reports

TAC Code:	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J
Workshops										
Number conducted	L	T	L	L	L/N	L	A	L	L	T
Subject matter	L	N	L	L	L/N	L	N	-	L	A
Size of audience	L	-	L	L	-	-	-	L	L	T
Position or location of audience	L	N	L	L	-	-	-	-	L	A
TAC person-effort	L	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
On-Site Consultations										
Number of consultations	L	T	L	L	L/N	L	A	L	L	L
Subject matter	L	N	L	L	L/N	L	N	L	L	L
Position or location of client	L	T	L	L	-	-	-	A	L	-
TAC person-effort	L	T	L	L	-	-	-	A	L	-
Telephone Consultations										
Number of consultations	T	T	-	L	-	-	T	L	T	L
Subject matter	A	A	-	L	-	-	A	L	A	L
Position or location of client	T	-	-	L	-	-	-	A	-	-
TAC person-effort	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Correspondence										
Number of letters	T	-	-	L	-	-	-	-	-	-
Subject matter	A	-	-	L	-	-	-	-	-	-
Position or location or recip.	T	-	-	L	-	-	-	-	-	-
TAC person-effort	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Materials Development										
Number of materials	N	N	-	L	-	-	N	-	N	-
Subject matter	N	L	-	L	-	N	L	-	L	-
TAC person-effort	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
In-Shop Problem Solving Assistance										
Number of events	-	-	-	-	N	-	-	-	-	-
Subject matter	-	-	-	-	N	N	-	-	-	N
Position or location of client	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
TAC person-effort	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Staff Development										
Number of staff involved	A	A	-	-	-	-	N	-	N	N
Subject matter	N	A	-	-	-	-	N	-	A	L
TAC person-effort	T	T	-	T	-	-	T	-	T	-
National System Activity										
Number of events	N	N	N	-	N	-	N	N	N	N
TAC person-effort	T	T	-	T	-	-	T	-	T	-

Note:- A = aggregated reference N = specific reference in textual narrative
L = list presentation T = tabular presentation - = no data available

3.1.6.1 COST ANALYSIS

In the two years of effort and cost data available to the Review Panel, the lack of uniform reporting across the ten TACs (see Table 3.4) made it impossible for the Panel to determine accurately the number of activities in each effort category across the national system or the average cost associated with each activity. An additional problem arose in the lack of specificity in the work statement of the TAC contracts.

Guided by the Request for Proposals, TAC contractors stated as their first task the provision of technical assistance services to SEAs and LEAs, including "acting as a technical evaluation consultant to SEAs and LEAs," "answering questions by telephone, in writing, or on site concerning implementation of the models," and "giving workshops." These activities, taken together, claim an estimated average of 87 percent of the person-days in the five TACs providing a person-effort breakdown in their Quarterly Reports, January-September, 1978. The remaining 13 percent is divided, in the Reports of the TACs, among staff training (an average of about four percent), management and reporting (eight percent), and the remaining functions (one percent).[5]

The 13 percent of total effort devoted to tasks other than technical assistance is not insignificant: it represents approximately 884 thousand dollars of the estimated 6.8 million dollar total cost for the second contract period. A recent cost analysis of educational dissemination programs (Paisley et al., 1978) showed that about one-third of the budget of a typical dissemination program (annual budget ca. 250 thousand dollars) was spent in "system maintenance" activities such as management, resource development, and staff training, with two-thirds of the budget spent in direct services to clients. In comparison, TACs use more of their budgets for direct client services and less for "system maintenance" activities.

To complete a cost analysis of the major function of the TACs, it is necessary to disaggregate the 87 percent of TAC effort devoted to workshops, on-site consultations, question-answering via telephone and correspondence, etc., and then compare the obtained profile with some appropriate baseline. In view of the missing data, only a tentative and incomplete analysis was possible, the results of which are presented in Appendix D. The Panel recognizes that the estimates stated in Appendix D, although representing our "best" guess, may be in error. We do believe, however, that analyses of TAC effort and cost similar to those reported or suggested in Appendix D, using more system-wide and detailed data than were available to the Panel, can be of value in clarifying the effort/cost range associated with the operation of the TACs.

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[5]Table 3.2 reports percentage of person-days spent on each non-management function based on total person-days minus management; the values reported here for the corresponding function are based on total person-days including management and, hence, are slightly lower.

3.2 TITLE I EVALUATION SUPPORT DOCUMENTS

Several documents related to TIERS and intended to facilitate the implementation of TIERS were prepared as part of the evaluation development contract awarded to RMC Research Corporation (Mountain View, California) (see p. 2). Three types of documents were written: technical documentation of the development project, implementation guides, and brief technical pamphlets. The technical documentation includes a summary of the activities conducted in developing the evaluation and reporting system and a detailed description of the evaluation models and the NCE metric. They appear to be intended for the staff of OED and other technically oriented audiences; e.g., the TACs, methodologists at universities.

There are three implementation guides and eighteen brief technical pamphlets. Such "support" publications were prepared to assist SEAs and LEAs in implementing TIERS in their specific situations and are available from OED. Table 3.5 contains a listing of these materials.

As mentioned in Sections I and II, the Panel learned during the course of its work that most of the support documents were to be revised as a result of an extensive review completed by the TACs. Thus a review by the Panel of such features as authoritativeness, presentation/format, and comprehensibility/readability was not performed.

Table 3.5 Technical Assistance Support Documents

IMPLEMENTATION GUIDES

1. User's Guide: ESEA Title I Evaluation and Reporting System
2. A Practical Guide to Measuring Project Impact on Student Achievement
3. A Procedural Guide for Validating Achievement Gains in Educational Projects

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TECHNICAL PAMPHLETS

Brief technical pamphlets that address topics related to the evaluation and reporting system:

1. Assessing the Adequacy of Normative Data
2. Characteristics of Eight Commonly Used, Nationally Normed Tests
3. Collecting Achievement Test Data
4. Common Evaluation Hazards
5. Composite Scores
6. Criterion-Referenced Tests
7. Factors that Influence Test Results
8. Interpreting NCEs
9. Local Norms
10. Out-of-Level Testing
11. Psychometric and Interpretational Problems with Grade-Equivalent Scores
12. Score Conversions
13. Selecting a Norm-Referenced Test
14. Selecting Students for Title I Projects
15. Statistical Adjustments for Nonequivalent Control Groups
16. Test Floor and Ceiling Effects
17. The Regression Effect
18. Types of Test Scores

SECTION IV

PERCEPTIONS OF THE TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE SUPPORT AND SERVICES

4.1 ASSEMBLAGE OF PERCEPTIONS

This section of the report contains a portrayal by the Panel of the many and various perceptions of the technical assistance support and services held by persons who are either affected by the system or who affect it in some way. The Panel found a complex and highly variable picture while interviewing LEA and SEA personnel, TAC staff, Federal personnel, parents, test publishers, and others connected with the system.

The Panel did not use an identical interview schedule for each interview. It seemed more effective to let the interviewers develop their own flow from topic to topic while being sure to cover all major areas of concern. Sometimes a respondent's own interests created a particular focus of attention.

It would be a misrepresentation of the many perceptions shared with the Panel to quantify and report them in tabular form. The Panel has tried to capture and convey the variability of perceptions and yet retain the strength of the statements reported. To be sure, perceptions varied considerably so the picture that is portrayed here is an attempt to reflect the many different feelings, opinions, and points of view shared with the Panel during its review.

Responses from interviewees were interpreted in the context in which they were given (i.e., a time of evolving and expanding technical assistance to the states). Whether the same perceptions would have been shared under different conditions could not be ascertained by the Panel.

The following aspects of the Technical Assistance Program are addressed in this section:

- Assumptions underlying TIERS and the need for technical assistance;
- Aspects of the Technical Assistance Support and Service (other than TACs): documents, Office of Evaluation and Dissemination, technical design, and State Education Agencies;
- TACs: their purpose, structure, operation, impact, and the future.

4.2 ASSUMPTIONS UNDERLYING TIERS AND THE NEED FOR TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

Almost all respondents believe that the major purpose of TIERS is to satisfy Congressional desires for summative information about Title I effectiveness. In fact, quite a few respondents "complained" that this was the case, indicating a feeling that "process evaluation" or "formative evaluation" or evaluation "of use to LEAs" would be a better purpose and do more good for Title I. These perceptions of most SEAs, TACs, and some OED personnel are interesting when compared to the perception of Congressional aides who were interviewed plus statements made in documents that were reviewed. Congressional aides stated a belief that the Congressional leaders who originated the legislation for Title I evaluation were equally concerned about developing a system that would promote Title I evaluation at the SEA and LEA levels. A Congressional belief was expressed that LEA evaluations would help to focus local attention toward needs for improvement in education.

In implementing TIERS, there is general agreement among all respondent groups that there is in fact a widespread need for technical assistance. Most respondents feel that only a handful of SEAs have existing technical capabilities for managing Title I evaluation. About five or six states (all large ones, but not all of the larger ones) were named by almost everyone who chose to suggest names. Yet, several of the smaller states feel that they have such a capability and several of them are handling the implementation of a model independent of their TAC. It is interesting to note that the perceptions of other SEAs about a particular SEA were not always shared by that SEA.

Many SEAs feel that most of their own LEAs do not have the capability of managing Title I evaluation without SEA and/or TAC assistance. But, some SEAs indicated that their larger LEAs were capable. ("Larger is defined differently in different states.) Several SEA personnel pointed out that some LEAs are better staffed to handle evaluation than most SEAs. TAC respondents feel the same way.

Almost all respondents feel that provision of technical assistance services to SEAs and LEAs is a legitimate function of the Federal Government. One respondent, however, indicated a belief that USOE should provide money only to states - any other alternative infringes on states' rights in the educational domain.

OED respondents indicated that need, not equity, was a guiding principle in the development of technical assistance for TIERS and that service should be available for everyone who needs and wants it rather than being distributed on the basis of some equity formula. Most SEA respondents who reacted to this point were in agreement, but not all. A few raised the question of "fairness" of service allocation, feeling that service "on demand" means that the SEAs with their own capability for providing the same

services are shortchanged in relation to less well staffed SEAs. Several of these SEAs suggested adding some flexibility to the TAC system that would give SEAs the choice of using their TAC or of receiving some direct grant if they chose not to use their TAC. OED is now providing some direct assistance to SEAs through "state refinement" grants to study certain issues related to Title I evaluation.

There is a general belief that the provision of technical assistance is best handled by agencies separate from OED. We found no disagreement on this point; technical assistance and enforcement of regulations should continue to be handled by separate groups.

4.3 ASPECTS OF TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE SUPPORT AND SERVICES (OTHER THAN TACs)

Perceptions of the TACs encompassed such a large part of this review that they are treated in detail in a separate section. The feelings of respondents can be summarized in the statement: a large majority of respondents like the present system, feel that it is beneficial to both SEAs and LEAs, and have no desire for change. They believe the provision of technical assistance is being done well. However, a small but vocal minority of SEA respondents feel that while the TAC system is useful to most states, it should contain options which could provide more useful assistance to states with strong existing evaluation staff, e.g., assistance in test scoring or data analysis.

Most SEAs liked the idea of the TAC system initially and still do. A few SEAs were apprehensive initially and now are quite positive about their TAC. When this feeling was expressed, the initial apprehension usually was due either to past history of Federal-state friction on Title I evaluation, or because of concerns about TAC operations - technical experts being unable to communicate effectively with LEAs or physical distance of the TAC from their SEA.

4.3.1 DOCUMENTS

A majority of the SEAs feel that the various Title I documents available to them are useful, and a very few feel that the documents alone could have met their needs for technical assistance. However, few of them grew enthusiastic about the documents. Some of them explained that documents can never replace consultants; some of them felt that the documents were too technical for LEAs; a few indicated that they filed their manuals in their circular file. Several SEAs indicated that they revised the manuals for their LEAs or used TAC revisions. Certain documents were seen as inappropriate (e.g., the RMC monograph on grade equivalents), but this attitude was not strong or pervasive. The reaction of critics of the OED documents could be characterized as one of benign neglect.

TAC respondents also feel that the OED documents have a place (but a very small place) in the implementation of TIERS. Most TAC respondents feel that personal contacts through workshops and consultations are the heart of a viable technical assistance program. TAC-produced workshop materials were judged to be much more valuable by SEAs than those produced by RMC. TACs indicate that they "tailor" their use of documents by providing the more technical ones to those who can receive benefit from them and abridging or revising the documents for others.

There is universal agreement that the OED newsletter is of little value. Few interviewees received it, and those that did found little useful information in it.

4.3.2 OFFICE OF EVALUATION AND DISSEMINATION

TAC respondents are quite pleased with their relationships with their monitors in OED. Several who have had previous experience with Federal monitoring, feel that the OED-TAC relationship is the best of this type that they have experienced. These compliments often carried the additional comments that the TACs are treated professionally, are not harassed, and are free to develop their programs within boundaries of the contracts. The suggestions for improvement that were made were for greater personal involvement of monitors with TAC staff and for some sort of evaluation of their work from OED.

SEA respondents feel no need for additional technical assistance directly from OED. A few SEAs indicated that it would be "nice" to have greater direct contact with OED, particularly for quick interpretations of policy. Several test publishers expressed the same desire, citing a lack of clarity in USOE policy.

No one favored the expansion of OED to serve as a single agency for providing technical service to the states. Great fears were expressed about tying service to a regulatory agency. In addition, it was felt to be impractical to serve all SEAs from one location.

4.3.3 TECHNICAL DESIGN

The purpose of the Review did *not* include an evaluation of the RMC models for implementation of TIERS. Hence, the Panel did not include in its site visit guides or telephone interview guides any questions about the values of and/or concerns about the models. This did not prevent a good many respondents from making observations about the models. The Panel decided to include these observations, in a summary fashion, as information that could be useful for reader understanding of the place of technical assistance with respect to the present view of TIERS held by those interviewed.

A large number of SEA and TAC respondents feel that Title I evaluation would be better characterized as Title I reporting. Most respondents feel that implementation of the models is providing (or will provide) better data than were available before. Some see it as a catalyst for change. But a few SEA respondents feel that the models are not "good enough" to warrant being mandated.

Not all respondents commented on the aggregation of data across LEAs to a state level and across SEAs to the Federal level, but of those who did, most were skeptical about the process. The "apples and oranges" analogy was used by several of those respondents. Expressions of disagreement with aggregation of data were stated strongly. This group of respondents included many TAC staff as well as SEA staff with greater than typical research training and some Federal staff.

Some respondents were critical of the value of the models. Common reasons cited were that they are not process oriented, they are not formative in nature, or they do not provide LEAs with information of much use to them for program development.

A series of specific concerns with the models themselves were expressed by some respondents; these concerns also appeared in the literature reviewed by the Panel. A list of some of these technical issues surrounding the models is provided in Appendix E.

In contrast to respondents who expressed serious reservations about the adequacy of the models is a larger group (SEA respondents primarily) who feel that implementation of a model is "not a big deal". They are looking for means to provide OE with what it requires with minimum effort from the SEA and their LEAs (e.g., "Let's meet the regulations and get on with more important things"). Prior to introduction of the Title I evaluation models, a few SEAs (a small minority) had been requiring LEAs to report uniform information using their own model.

4.3.4 STATE EDUCATION AGENCIES

Many SEA personnel perceive their own situation as remarkably different from other SEAs. The most common examples are "we have many very small districts" or "we have a strong tradition of local autonomy". This feeling of uniqueness is echoed to some extent by the TACs. They tend to see their constituent states as different from states in other regions as well as different from each other. It is interesting, however, to contrast these feelings with the few idiosyncratic topics relating to implementation of TIERS that are addressed in workshops and consultations - most of them deal with universals such as selecting the right test, selecting dates of administration, testing out of level, etc.

Most respondents indicated that unmet needs for technical assistance remained because of timing (not all LEAs are into implementation) and replacements (high staff turnover rate in LEAs). But, no SEAs felt that

these needs could not currently be met by SEA personnel or the TACs or a private contractor. The "needs" discussed here are needs associated with implementing one of the models. Some SEAs indicated that they have needs in other aspects that will not be met by the OED Technical Assistance Program, e.g., program development.

A majority of the SEAs feel that they could *not* have handled the evaluation with the Title I models without their TAC, and additional SEAs feel that they could not have handled it as well. Many SEAs perceive the technical expertise of their own Title I evaluation staff to be less than adequate for implementation of the models (including some interviewees' characterization of their own skills). On the other hand, a few SEAs feel that their own technical expertise is entirely sufficient for state-wide implementation of the models. (At least one SEA feels that its evaluation staff is more competent than the staff of its regional TAC.) TAC respondents concur generally that some states do have the capability, but most do not. Some SEAs had "early training" directly from RMC and felt that was all they needed. Many SEAs feel that expansion of staff is impossible because of freezes on hiring and low wages. Many feel that the only way to accomplish technical assistance is with outside help.

Most respondents feel that LEA personnel can be "trained" to implement one of the models and to *report* their test data to the SEA. Most feel that only a relatively few LEAs have (or ever will have) the capacity to handle local *evaluations* (keeping in mind a distinction they see between evaluation and reporting). A few SEAs feel so strongly about LEA limitations that the SEA handles all test scoring and processing centrally; LEAs receive their own Title I reports, but do not generate them. A number of other SEAs expressed a desire to centralize scoring, but indicated lack of money or time to accomplish it.

Many SEAs, but not all, develop a state-wide Title I summary for their state. A few SEAs also prepare LEA summaries.

Dissemination of the reports is more apt to be incidental than deliberate and planned; reports are "available". SEA staff sometimes use information from a report in a speech. Numerous SEAs feel that promoting the reports would be unwise; they believe that the media would be more apt to see negative implications than positive ones (let sleeping dogs lie).

Panel members gathered quite a bit of context information about SEAs during their interviews. A characterization of areas of variability among states is provided for the reader in Appendix F. The information therein may be of use in understanding the perceptions reported in this section.

4.4 TACs

4.4.1 PURPOSE

While almost all respondents feel that the purpose of the TACs is to provide technical assistance in the implementation of TIERS, very few question this statement. These few respondents see the TACs as part of a continuing power struggle between SEAs and the Federal Government.

4.4.2 STRUCTURE

The selection of the HEW regional configurations of states as the basis for TAC assignments is felt to be appropriate by most respondents. The use of ten TACs seems reasonable to most respondents who volunteered information on this point (the question was not asked routinely). A couple of SEAs would like to have their own TAC. One SEA suggested that the large states be grouped and be given their own TAC.

A few SEAs expressed some concern about the distance between themselves and their TAC. Several of them indicated that it would be nice if there were a TAC representative resident in their state or in a neighboring state (not that the TAC center needed to be there). One SEA indicated some hesitancy about requesting service because of distance. In contrast, a greater number of SEAs expressed the hope that their own TAC center would be refunded because of the excellent rapport which they feel they have with their TAC. These were voluntary remarks, not the result of a direct question. One TAC respondent questioned the wisdom of maintaining a TAC outside the region it serves.

Very few respondents look upon the TACs as an extended arm of OE; most felt that just the opposite was true - that the TACs were independent of the policies of Washington, and that that was a definite advantage. A few SEAs see the TAC system as an indirect move toward greater Federal control of education, but this is not the attitude of most SEAs.

All SEAs indicated that the level of use of TAC services was their own choice, not TAC's. This simply corresponds to the reality of the OED charge to the TACs. In practice, however, some SEAs permit (even encourage) direct LEA contacts with their TAC upon LEA initiative. But most SEAs prefer to retain a role as "first" source of information for their LEAs, with referral to TACs made by the SEA. The level of use by LEAs varies from zero in a few states to other states where the TAC meets with nearly every LEA in the state. Level of TAC use also is related to the state of implementation of a model in a particular state. All of which is felt to be appropriate by all respondents; no one objected to the system that maintains SEA control over allocation of technical assistance to LEAs.

There is widespread agreement that the present restrictions on TACs are reasonable and necessary. A few SEAs would like to be able to use their TAC for actual data processing, clarification of Federal policy, and other services. Other SEAs reject this idea as too much of an incursion of an outside agency into SEA affairs. In general, TACs are more amenable to an expansion of the types of services they can offer than are the SEAs. But, TACs do not agree completely among themselves - some are "anxious" to expand services; others are quite "content" to rely on SEA initiative.

Most SEAs do not see "political" problems with their TAC. They feel that the restrictions on the TACs in terms of avoiding policy decisions are effective in keeping the TAC apolitical. Several SEAs pointed out that the use or nonuse of TAC services is an SEA choice. The few SEAs who do see political problems express a concern that the TAC system is one more attempt of the Federal bureauracy to foist its own value structure on the states. Several TACs indicated a feeling that they were perceived more as representatives of their parent organization (ETS, NWREL, etc.) than as representatives of USOE.

By and large TAC respondents see the ideal size of a TAC to be very close to their current size. SEA respondents did not comment on this point.

Many SEAs are not particularly well informed about the needs for technical assistance of other SEAs in their region. Some expressed "interest in knowing more" about what other states are doing; others felt that it would not be of any great help to know about the needs of other states ("our problems are unique" is a common feeling). Some TACs, but not all, have created an advisory or coordinating committee consisting of representatives of each SEA in their region. Where this has been done, most involved SEAs indicated that it is a worthwhile activity. A few SEAs indicated that such regional meetings were not particularly worthwhile, i.e., "we didn't learn much". Other SEAs would like more regional meetings. TACs differ on this point. Not surprisingly, those TACs with a regional committee like them and those TACs without them see no need to have one.

The meetings of TAC Directors are felt by most TAC respondents to be "necessary", but many of the Directors would reorganize them. The most common "value" expressed was the opportunity to share experiences informally at these meetings. The most common item of least value is felt to be "*lengthy* recitations of individual TAC accomplishments". Again, there is a strong relationship between an individual TAC Director's own point of view about important TAC activities and his/her feeling as to the importance of agenda items for Directors' meetings. The various TAC Directors fell at distinctly different points on the continuum of interest in or commitment to service versus research.

There is a definite desire on the part of a number of TAC staff who are not Directors for some interaction of total staff across TACs. Not all of them are happy about receiving reports of Directors' meetings as "filtered" through their Director. A few indicated a desire to be personally involved in decision making. A few indicated a desire for more personal contact with OED staff for discussion of issues.

4.4.3 OPERATION

Staff assignments, of course, differ across TACs. All TACs indicate some "specialization" of staff assignments; more in the larger TACs, naturally. All TACs indicate an effort to match individual strengths with assignments. Some TACs assign staff to specific states because of a feeling that better relationships can be developed that way; other TACs prefer a team approach to field assignments. SEAs did express an interest in having one person continuously assigned to them in order to assume semblance of stability (e.g., Dr. "X" is seen by LEAs as "the TAC, Title I evaluation guy" when he comes around).

While all TAC respondents agree that technical competency is important for all TAC staff, not all respondents agree that a doctorate is essential. Some feel that special skills may be as important as an earned degree. If, as many TACs desire, they are allowed to expand their scope of work in the future, they feel that greater staff variety will be needed.

Almost all SEAs praise their TAC representatives as individuals who are both competent and easy to work with. Most SEAs go out of the way to make these points; they often repeat these points. A few SEAs did indicate some initial concerns about TAC representatives being able to communicate easily and effectively with LEAs (non technical persons). Of these initial concerns, SEAs indicated that most were either unfounded or the TAC representatives changed their levels of presentation. A couple of SEA respondents feel that their TAC representatives still are too technical in their presentations, and/or "do not understand the problems of LEAs".

Most TAC respondents feel that they are able to utilize their own skills and develop their own professional interests quite well in their present assignments, but ... a few of them did express a desire to be able to do research. One TAC respondent indicated a feeling that some staff were taking advantage of their TAC time to write proposals for funding of other projects. This question was not a part of our interview schedule.

Respondents generally like the fact that TACs can be contacted easily by telephone if desired. Feelings about the importance of that service vary however. A few respondents see it as a vital part of technical assistance; most see it as a nice service.

A majority of the respondents feel that their TAC is not duplicating services that are or should be available elsewhere. A few SEAs did indicate that a nearby university probably could have provided the services, although specific reservations were expressed about problems of continuity with outside consultants. Most TACs disagree with the idea that universities would have been a viable choice. A few SEAs do use private contractors now for some of their technical assistance.

The number of LEA requests for technical assistance varies from almost every LEA in some states to none in other states. This variation seems to be related primarily to the SEA attitude toward implementation of the models. Quite a few states have reached, or are close to, 100% implementation (more LEA requests) while a few have barely begun (few LEA requests). Some SEAs try to make reporting into a very routine, simple, nondisruptive process (fewer LEA requests) while others use reporting as a means for extensive intervention with LEAs, with workshops and consultant help (usually from a TAC). Almost all SEAs report that LEA requests for technical assistance are met. It is felt that LEA requests will continue to reflect, primarily, the level of implementation of one of the models in a given state. Further, it is felt that continuing requests will be maintained at some level - primarily because of constant turnover of Title I staff in LEAs, problems in quality control, and requirements for data processing.

TACs are felt to be very responsive to requests. They received accolades from almost all SEAs that use them (and most do). This was true in relation to speed of response and also in relation to flexibility in scheduling. There seems to be near unanimity on this point.

Another point of near unanimity among SEAs is that TACs are not pushing or promoting their services. (Although at least one SEA did indicate that its TAC was "calling me up to urge me to use their services". This did not bother the respondent.) This point is interesting when juxtaposed with the fact that some TACs are much more active in the field than others. Either SEAs in some regions simply need or want more technical assistance than other SEAs which feel that it is not needed or which are uninformed about services available from their TAC, or respondents differ in their perception of the word, promotion .

TAC respondents differ from SEA respondents in their perception of whether promotion is taking place. Most TACs do not see themselves as being "pushy", but some TAC respondents do see other TACs as promoting their own services. A few TAC respondents feel some pressure from OED to do more promoting.

4.4.4 IMPACT

A number of respondents look upon the TACs as ombudsmen between SEAs and OED; they can and do communicate concerns of SEAs to OED. At least one TAC respondent feels that SEA concerns, communicated by TACs to OED, have had a definite positive impact on the regulations that are now being finalized.

A few TAC respondents indicated a feeling that they have had an impact on a few SEAs through an upgrading of evaluation staff. SEA respondents see staff changes more as an SEA response to the regulations.

Almost all respondents feel that a major impact of the TACs has been to help SEAs and LEAs in the speed and in the ease of model implementation.

Most respondents are concerned about the accuracy of data from LEAs. But, most also feel that it is "more accurate" than it was several years ago. Only a few of the SEAs, however, are implementing any real quality control mechanisms. Of these latter SEAs, several are moving to reduce the clerical efforts of the LEAs, i.e., asking LEAs to report raw test scores only or to provide test answer sheets for centralized, SEA-controlled scoring. TAC respondents are almost unanimous in their concern about accuracy of results.

Most SEAs feel that TAC assistance has helped (or will help) to produce better data. Indications that this is true were often qualified, e.g., "better" still may not be good enough; accuracy is a continuing problem; does the aggregated data really mean anything, etc. Some SEAs were not sure that better data would be produced.

TACs are perceived as being helpful on the great variety of tasks associated with implementing the models. The only problems on which they are felt not to be helpful are ones for which they are forbidden by contract to assist, e.g., specific choice of a test.

Most respondents feel that the LEAs have benefited from TAC assistance. However, the types of benefits they mention are most apt to be in the areas of methods for test selection, knowledge of types of test scores, reasons for evaluating, out of level testing, etc. Very few SEAs feel that their LEAs are/will be receiving much benefit from the LEA Title I evaluation *results*. TAC respondents agree.

Many SEAs feel that their LEAs are more favorably inclined toward evaluation and toward testing as a result of TAC workshops and/or consultant visits. LEAs also are asking better questions about evaluation and testing. SEAs see this as a very positive side effect of the TAC system.

A number of respondents indicated a feeling that a side effect of TAC assistance will be better evaluation in many SEAs and LEAs. By this, they mean that an awareness of what evaluation is all about has created a

desire for and willingness to use evaluation more often as a tool for program improvement. Other respondents are less sure that any new awareness of evaluation represents a real and/or permanent impact.

Some TAC and SEA respondents expressed concerns that those who need (and can make use of) technical assistance are not always the ones who attended workshops; that some workshop attendees are not directly involved in Title I evaluation with the frequent result that workshop content never seems to get communicated to those who really need it "back home".

A few SEA respondents questioned the cost effectiveness of the TAC system. Those who did generally feel that the same amount of money could have purchased more impact on evaluation in LEAs by direct grants to SEAs. In contrast to this, other respondents feel that the present system is more cost effective than direct grants would be - citing potential waste or diversion of funds or staffing problems.

A number of TAC respondents feel that in some states utilization of their services by SEAs has resulted in a positive increase in interactions between SEA and LEA Title I staff and research/evaluation staff when they are located in separate administrative units. This question was not pursued with SEA respondents.

A few TAC respondents feel that one indirect impact of the system has been to provide personal benefits for themselves, i.e., in professional associations, professional advancement, and professional contacts.

A number of TAC respondents and some SEA respondents feel that more and better research on the "problems" of the RMC models has been fostered by the system. Although the RMC developers of the models do have their supporters among SEA personnel, a much larger number of SEA respondents feel more comfortable with their own TAC representatives when considering questions of adequacy and of implementation of the models. By most SEAs, TACs are perceived as providing a necessary combination of technical expertise and knowledge of the practical problems of implementation.

A small number of respondents suggested that a potential negative impact of the TACs is the use of TACs as a permanent "crutch" for SEAs who ought to develop their own evaluative capabilities.

A few SEA and TAC respondents mentioned the impact of the TIERS system on publishers. The most obvious impact mentioned was the necessity for publishers to do norming of tests so that they conform with the requirements of use with one of the models. The test publishers agreed with this belief. An additional point that was made by several SEA and TAC respondents was the feeling that some publishers' representatives are serving as consultants to LEAs on the implementation of Title I requirements. When this point was mentioned, it usually was in a negative context as being an inappropriate activity for persons without specific training in use of the models. With one exception, the test publishers the Panel queried are not providing such training. A few SEA and TAC respondents also expressed this concern about university consultants.

So far, very few respondents see much impact of TACs in public reporting of Title I results either by SEAs or LEAs. Some respondents see this as a likely future impact of TAC services. Other respondents, primarily from SEAs, do *not* see public reporting of Title I as a desirable activity. The general response from SEAs is that they do produce summary reports of state-wide results which are available if someone asks for them. The general feeling is that active dissemination of such results would produce public concerns about Title I that would be much more negative than positive. In this connection, it is interesting to note that one Congressional aide felt that one of the purposes of the "TIERS" legislation was to let the public know what was happening in Title I programs locally *so that* the public would force educators to do a better job. "Public information will force public reaction."

4.4.5 THE FUTURE

Most SEAs feel that the TACs should be funded for another period ranging from two to five years and they suggest that the design of the lifespan of the TACs must be related to what the regulations require in the future. No one called for immediate abolition of the system; some respondents suggested that TACs should become a permanent system. Those who feel that a relatively short life for the TACs is most appropriate tend to be SEAs that already are implementing the model in all or most LEAs, who see implementation as "no big deal", or who feel that the regulations are not apt to change much. Those who opt for a four or five year life span, or who suggest that one cannot decide now on an appropriate life span, tend to be SEAs who either are more recently into implementation or who see continuing needs because of turnover of Title I staff, quality control and data processing problems, or because the regulations may be quite different in the future. Those SEAs who project a long life tend to want additional types of service from their TAC (e.g., data analysis, process evaluation, program development).

Attitudes of TAC respondents run the gamut from TACs-are-temporary to TACs-should-be-permanent, but the modal responses lean much more toward a semi-permanent position. A major reason cited for longevity is the transiency of Title I staff. But other reasons are cited, too, primarily reasons based on a felt need for additional types of services. Various types of service are mentioned: consultant help in program improvement (which would require different types of staff members), research studies on the models and on their implementation, help in process evaluation, and help in preparing grant proposals.

A few SEAs indicated needs for assistance not currently permissible for TACs to provide, e.g., analysis of data and program development. But, other SEAs indicated that TACs should not be permitted to offer such services. The few proponents seem to think of it as "a nice" addition to existing TAC services; the few opponents seem to see such additions as "another step" toward Federal control and express strong feelings of opposition.

When asked if they could suggest a better way for OED to provide technical assistance to SEAs than the TAC system, most SEAs said no. Most of them proceeded to indicate almost complete satisfaction with the present program. However, there were a small number of SEA respondents who took exception. Most of them are or were active in the CEIS organization, although not all CEIS representatives interviewed felt this way. The suggestions from the SEA representatives who took exception centered around the offering of alternative approaches for technical assistance such as direct grants of money to those SEAs who preferred that to using the services of their TAC. These respondents generally suggested that some of the large SEAs already have in place a staff of technically competent evaluators who are serving the needs of their states. They feel that they do not need TAC assistance and, by not using it, are not receiving their share of the direct help from OED which they "deserve". It is important to note that SEAs are not consistent on this point within staff. It is not unusual for one SEA staff member to strongly support the existing TAC system while a colleague from the same SEA suggests modification. Feelings often are strong on both sides.

Because of the importance of this point to the study, most SEA respondents were asked the additional question as to whether they would have preferred receiving a direct grant of money to receiving TAC services. Some SEA SEA respondents said yes (a larger number than those who had on their own initiative suggested options to the TAC system), but a large majority said no, including one SEA which doesn't use its TAC. Several reasons were advanced for saying no: (1) our state would not hire additional staff even if given money ("we have a freeze on hiring"), (2) money would be diverted internally for other uses ("it would just mire us deeper in our own mudhole"), (3) we could never hire staff as competent as TAC staff ("our salaries are too low to get good staff"), and (4) we would just have to use the money to hire consultants anyway. Federal interviewees also indicated problems associated with differential treatment of states.

SECTION V

CONSIDERATION OF ALTERNATIVE SYSTEMS FOR DELIVERING TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

5.1 CHARGE TO THE REVIEW PANEL

The Review Panel was asked to consider whether the structure and functions of the technical assistance program should be changed. As will be seen in Section VI, the Panel does not recommend major changes in the structure and functions at this time. However, it was useful to consider changes that might be made at a future time. The following discussion outlines some of the considerations that would enter into such changes. Additional background for the discussion appears in Appendix G.

5.2 STATUTORY BASIS FOR DEFINING OBJECTIVES OF THE TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

Section 183(e) of the Education Amendments of 1978 directs the Commissioner of Education to "provide such technical and other assistance as may be necessary to state education agencies to enable them to assist local education agencies in the development and application of a systematic evaluation of programs in accordance with the models developed (under Section 183(d)) by the Commissioner." Like Section 151(e), its predecessor, Section 183(e) does not prescribe in any way the extert, forms, or occasions of technical assistance but does direct that the technical assistance be provided to SEAs and that the content of the assistance be concerned with the "development and application of a systematic evaluation of programs."

The inclusion in Section 183(e) of " ... and other assistance" is noteworthy because it raises the possibility of hands-on assistance in planning for, administering, and analyzing Title I evaluations. For example, regional service bureaus could be established to score tests, conduct error checks, complete reporting forms, interpret outcomes for local planners, etc. In this section, the possibility of providing other than technical forms of assistance is considered as a source of balance in some of the alternative systems.

A parallel concern in defining alternative systems for delivering assistance arises in Section 183(h), which directs the Commissioner to "develop a system for the gathering and dissemination of results of evaluations and for the identification of exemplary programs and projects, or of particularly effective elements of programs and projects, and for the dissemination of information concerning such programs and projects or such elements thereof to state and local education agencies responsible for the design and conduct of programs and projects under this title, and to the education profession and the general public." One interpretation of the combined intent of Sections 183(e) and 183(h) would be a "Title I Evaluation

Information System" whose two components deal with technical assistance focusing on evaluation models and with dissemination focusing on exemplary programs and projects.

Since Section 183(h) is implemented primarily through the National Diffusion Network and through other Title I program efforts, the Technical Assistance Program now assigns limited Section 183(h) responsibility to the TACs by directing them to assist education agencies in preparing exemplary program/project descriptions for submission to the Federal Joint Dissemination Review Panel. A similar situation exists with respect to the state refinement work contained in Section 183(c). Here, though, the parent organizations housing the TACs can be subcontracted by a state to complete a portion of the work outlined in the proposal.

In summary, the functions that Section 183 assigns to a delivery system established by the Commissioner definitely must include technical assistance and may also include other forms of assistance focusing on evaluation and dissemination.

Several other sections of Title I, as amended by subsequent legislation, imply possible new functions for the Technical Assistance Program and the TACs. These include, for example, Section 124 (requiring LEA needs assessments) and Section 166 (calling for SEA assistance to LEAs in program improvement). In other words, a statutory basis can be found for defining the objectives of the Technical Assistance Program more broadly.

5.3 CONSIDERATIONS SUGGESTED BY THE HISTORY OF THE TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

The following points helped to structure the Panel's thinking about alternative systems.

5.3.1 TITLE I EVALUATION MODELS AND THE PROPOSED REGULATIONS AS A "MOVING TARGET"

Improvements in educational practice pass through phases of development, testing, acceptance, widespread application, and obsolescence or revision to meet changing needs. In its maturity, a practice can be imparted to educators in both preservice and inservice settings by means of textbooks, demonstrations, trial-and-feedback, etc. If the Title I evaluation models and the proposed regulations were now "mature" improvements, we could propose a conventional strategy for imparting them to educators. However, both the models and the regulations continue to change.

It is difficult to visualize the models and regulations "textbooked" at this time, although practitioner codifications ranging in form from that used for the Physician's Desk Reference to the Manual of the U.S. Forest Service, among others, can be considered.

5.3.2 PRIMARY AND SECONDARY OBJECTIVES OF TITLE I EVALUATION TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

The primary objective of the Technical Assistance Program is to "provide such technical and other assistance as may be necessary to state education agencies to enable them to assist local education agencies in the development and application of a systematic evaluation of programs in accordance with the models developed by the Commissioner." If the program had no secondary objectives, this primary objective might be achieved through a narrow form of assistance emphasizing rote procedures for testing, scoring, and reporting. However, it is evident that neither the technical assistance specialists (e.g., TAC staff in the present system) nor their state and local clients would be satisfied with rote procedures that ignore related issues such as formative evaluation for program improvement, strengthening of local evaluation skills, establishement of consortia of Title I evaluators, etc.

Every system for delivering technical assistance achieves intended or unintended secondary objectives in addition to the changes that are its primary objective. Secondary objectives for Title I evaluation technical assistance may include creating intrastate or interstate consortia of evaluators, increasing the skilled evaluation workforce, upgrading related evaluation programs, improving Federal-state-local concurrence on Title I issues, using Title I evaluation to advance the state of the art in educational evaluation methods, etc.

Particular forms of technical assistance are determined by particular combinations of primary and secondary objectives. A preference ranking of primary and secondary objectives, together with an allocation of resources to each objective, would indicate a desirable form of technical assistance in terms of organization, service, etc. However, since secondary objectives are usually unspecified in laws or regulations, it is difficult to defend a policy that favors one secondary objective over another. In any event, the secondary objectives of Title I technical assistance should be considered in comparing alternative systems, because the policymaker is accountable for secondary consequences of the chosen system.

5.4 CONSIDERATIONS SUGGESTED BY THE EXPERIENCE OF OTHER TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS

5.4.1 PROVIDER FOCUS VERSUS RECEIVER FOCUS

In an extreme contrast, a technical assistance delivery system can be planned around designated *providers*, with the receivers' prerogative limited to use or nonuse of the offered service, or it can be planned around designated *receivers*, with the providers' prerogative limited to bidding for service contracts from receivers.

The present Technical Assistance Program has a provider focus; one provider offers exclusive services in each region. However, since SEAs were consulted in the selection of providers (see Section III), the provider focus is not extreme.

It is unlikely that an extreme receiver focus would supplant the present system, if only because the Office of Education has a responsibility under Section 183(e) to ensure that *competent* assistance is provided to SEAs.

That is, whereas a receiver focus could be implemented by awarding a "technical assistance voucher" to each SEA, which it could spend to buy technical assistance from any source it chooses, the Office of Education would be justified in requiring assurance that the chosen provider is competent to offer the assistance that Section 183(e) calls for.

Despite the fact that neither an extreme provider focus nor an extreme receiver focus is likely in a future system, the distinction between the two is real and involves significant tradeoffs for USOE.

5.4.2 A SINGULAR SYSTEM VERSUS PLURALISTIC SYSTEMS

The present system is singular; almost all of the intent of Section 183(e) is implemented through the 10 regional TACs. (Ad hoc contracts for developing and documenting TIERS are one exception, and the field activities of USOE staff are another exception.) Pluralistic systems can be envisioned in which different categories of providers would be funded to address different objectives. For example, TAC-like organizations would continue to be funded to provide on-call problem-solving and decision-making assistance. Data processing service bureaus might be funded to provide some of the "other assistance" that Section 183(e) mentions. Universities might be funded to offer summer sessions on Title I evaluation for state and local personnel who seek to improve their evaluation skills. Professional associations might be funded to conduct conference presessions for the same purpose. A publishing house might be funded to produce high-quality system-wide publications, and a media center might be funded to produce high-quality system-wide videocassettes, films, slide sets, etc.

A pluralistic system could be planned within both a provider focus and a receiver focus. Within a provider focus, a receiver would be offered services from only one provider in each category. Within a receiver focus, competition among "accredited" providers would be allowed.

5.4.3 CRITERIA FOR EVALUATING ALTERNATIVE SYSTEMS

The literature on educational communication offers many criteria for comparing alternative technical assistance systems. We can distill these criteria into five categories: (1) technical adequacy, isomorphism, coherence, etc.; (2) responsiveness to needs in terms of times, settings, formats, etc.; (3) congruence with policies and related requirements of sponsor; (4) congruence with policies and related requirements of clients; (5) cost-efficiency. When these criteria are cited below with reference to specific alternative systems, they are referred to more simply as: (1) technical adequacy, (2) responsiveness, (3) sponsor acceptability, (4) client acceptability, (5) cost-efficiency.

5.5 SOME ALTERNATIVE DELIVERY SYSTEMS AND THEIR PROBABLE EFFECTS

This section is organized in terms of *tactical* changes in the existing technical assistance system versus *strategic* changes that would channel the Commissioner's responsibility for Title I evaluation technical assistance through different systems.

5.5.1 TACTICAL CHANGES

Changes in this category have the goal of improving the cost-efficiency of the existing system. One set of changes would deal with repetition of effort in an individual TAC - for example, in the conduct of orientation workshops. Another set of changes would deal with duplication of effort across TACs - for example, preparing more than one version of equivalent materials for publications.

Two approaches to the reduction of repetition within a TAC may be considered. First, if the topic of a repeated activity is procedural (e.g., conversion of scores, completion of forms), it should be possible to teach the topic through an algorithmic guide. Such a guide differs somewhat from the Technical Pamphlets (see Table 3.5) that have already been published; it *directs* rather than *explains* a procedure. Second, if the topic requires more judgment, it should be possible to institute "training of trainers". At several points within a state, local evaluators or Title I coordinators could be trained to serve as trainers of others on topics such as test selection and interpretation of results.

Reduction of duplication of effort across TACs calls for system-wide planning and an extension of the present committee structure. Whereas inter-TAC committees now deal with substantive issues (e.g., committees on Model A, Rasch model, uses of data), there should also be system-wide commissioning of materials, publications, and other resources needed by every TAC. When a single TAC is commissioned to produce a given product, albeit conforming to system-wide formats and specifications, progress can be made beyond the present "seat of the pants" approach in which materials do not go through the full development and testing cycle that is followed in other systems (such as the National Diffusion Network).

System-wide coordination could also lead to the production of more multimedia tools for workshops and self-instruction in SEAs and LEAs. For example, slide-tape or videocassette presentation of repeated workshop topics might make the workshops more interesting for attendants. Workshop presenters supplied with such teaching tools would have less need for support staff, and some reduction could be made in the average number of TAC person-days devoted to each workshop. Self-instructional tools, such as audiocassettes, are inexpensive to distribute but can achieve many of the learning objectives of workshops. Just as important, they remain in the SEA or LEA as resources for repeated use.

Because TACs have worked out reasonable and accepted procedures for providing technical assistance via workshops, on-site consultations, and telephone/correspondence contacts, tactical changes that can be envisioned have only two goals: (1) reduction of the labor-intensiveness and thereby the cost of technical assistance, and (2) improvement of the quality of documentation and teaching materials available to the system.

How do these tactical changes fare on the five criteria of technical adequacy, responsiveness, sponsor acceptability, client acceptability, and cost-efficiency? Without field testing, we can't say for sure. However, a tentative "box score" can be ventured on the basis of the Panel's interviews in the field and the experience of other educational communication programs. The box score, which will also be used with alternative systems described later in this section, has a range of five points. The midpoint is zero and represents no advantage or disadvantage relative to the present system. The scores of +1 and -1 represent moderate advantage and disadvantage relative to the present system, and the scores of +2 and -2 represent marked advantage and disadvantage. An attempt is made to explain each score.

5.5.1.1 BOX SCORE FOR TACTICAL CHANGES

Technical adequacy, +1; responsiveness, 0; sponsor acceptability, 0; client acceptablity, 0; cost-efficiency, +1. These tactical changes represent the "mid-course correction" that any developing system can profit from. As long as the fundamental structure of the system is left intact, well-chosen tactical changes (e.g., system-wide development of resources) are likely to yield advantages in technical adequacy and cost-efficiency while leaving sponsor acceptability and client acceptability as they were. Responsiveness receives a 0 score because of the balancing of positive and negative factors; whereas these changes free time for TAC staff to deal with clients' individual needs, they may also affect the flexibility of some services.

5.5.2 STRATEGIC CHANGES

Four alternative systems representing strategic changes from the present system are described below. The Panel does not endorse any of these systems but believes that they offer a broad perspective for comtemplating the future of technical assistance delivery.

5.5.2.1 A STATE-BASED "VOUCHER SYSTEM"

This is the only alternative to be described that assumes a receiver focus. SEAs would be awarded Section 183(e) funds according to some equitable formula. The regulations establishing this system might or might not allow the funds (apart from the usual administrative fraction) to be spent on state agency personnel. The states would negotiate technical assistance contracts either on a sole source or competitive basis; USOE would probably require some "accreditation" of contractors to ensure that Section 183(e) was being competently implemented.

5.5.2.1.1 Box Score for the State-based "Voucher System"

Technical adequacy, -1; responsiveness, 0; sponsor acceptability, -1; client acceptability, +1; cost-efficiency, -1. While some states would welcome the prerogatives that the voucher system creates, it is likely that both technical adequacy and cost-efficiency would suffer. This conclusion is based on the *average* technical adequacy and cost-efficiency of contractors; we don't mean to imply that some contractors may not actually improve on the technical adequacy or cost-efficiency of the present system. Sponsor acceptability is expected to be lower for the voucher system than for the present system because of the administrative difficulty of implementing Section 183(e) in this way.

5.5.2.2 A NATIONAL TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE CENTER

National contracts to provide a service like technical assistance are not unusual; a number of such contracts in other program areas are held by regional laboratories and other organizations. A single national TAC would function much as the regional TACs now do. It would gain various efficiencies in staff utilization, including specialization and flexibility in scheduling service from the larger cadre of staff members. It would serve as its own materials production center. Because of economies of scale both in labor and in other direct costs, the administrative fraction of the budget might decline.

Longer travel distances to sites of workshops and consultations would have two implications. First, trips would tend to be scheduled on a circuit basis; client schedules would be somewhat more difficult to coordinate. Second, telephone/correspondence contacts and materials distribution would be used to displace some travel.

5.5.2.2.1 Box Score for the National Technical Assistance Center

Technical adequacy, +1; responsiveness, -1; sponsor acceptability, 0; client acceptability, -2; cost-efficiency, +1. The national TAC would probably be less responsive and less acceptable to the states than "their" regional TACs now are. Acceptability to USOE would not change much, both because of the government's good relationship with the existing TACs and because of the friction that often occurs between the government and a large contractor, offsetting some of the monitoring advantages. Technical adequacy and cost-efficiency should both benefit from centralization, if procedures for delivering service to the entire country are carefully worked out.

5.5.2.3 A HIGH-TECHNOLOGY SYSTEM

NASA, NSF, and other agencies have demonstrated that high-technology communication systems can achieve most of the same effects as low-technology (e.g., face-to-face) systems at lower cost. Assuming that the Technical Assistance Program will cost $8 million to $10 million in 1980, the budget base is large enough to support computer teleconferencing and/or video teleconferencing from and to a national coordination center (*not* a national TAC), state agencies, and local districts. Computer retrievable documentation and data would progressively improve the reporting system. Research on teleconferencing suggests that participants' rapport with each other can be sustained through many teleconferencing sessions as long as they have occasional opportunity to meet face to face.

5.5.2.3.1 Box Score for the High-technology System

Technical adequacy, 0; responsiveness, +1; sponsor acceptability, 0; client acceptability, -1; cost-efficiency, +2 (over time). The high-technology system is a radical departure from the present labor-intensive and travel-intensive system. We can only assume that its technical adequacy would be required to equal that of the present system. Acceptability to sponsor and clients is a composite of positive and negative factors. Responsiveness would probably be perceived as high because of the opportunity for daily contact with any other person in the system and the immediacy of documentation and data in computer memory. The cost-efficiency of a high-technology communication system changes dramatically over time as capital costs are amortized; telecommunication consumes little energy and is less affected by labor and material inflation than other sectors of the economy.

5.5.2.4 A PLURALISTIC SYSTEM

Departing from the assumption that there should be a singular system for delivering technical assistance, a pluralistic system would be composed of different components addressing different objectives of the

Technical Assistance Program. As mentioned previously in this section, TACs, providing on-call problem-solving and decision-making assistance, would probably be the backbone of the system. Data processing bureaus, universities, professional associations, publishing and media production companies, and other kinds of organizations would play specific roles.

A noncompeting model of pluralistic service is easier to describe than a competing model. In the noncompeting model, each state agency and its associated local districts have access to one TAC, one data processing bureau, one university program, etc., under Federal sponsorship. Then as now, of course, they can negotiate separately for services elsewhere.

The additional components in the pluralistic system have the effect of reducing error in Title I evaluation, improving local evaluation capacity, creating higher-quality documentation for the system, etc. The TACs function much as they do now, except that their ancillary and less effective activities are assigned to other components of the system.

5.5.2.4.1 Box Score for the Pluralistic System

Technical adequacy, +2; responsiveness, +1; sponsor acceptability, -1; client acceptability, +1; cost-efficiency, -1. A pluralistic system would undoubtedly cost more than the present singular system, partly because of inefficiencies inherent in pluralism and partly because it aspires to do more. On the other hand, its technical adequacy would also be higher because of the functions that have shifted from being "loose ends" at the TACs to central activities within other components. The states would like a pluralistic system more than USOE would; the states would see more recourses for assistance, while USOE would see a more complicated system to monitor.

5.6 A COMMENT ON ALTERNATIVE SYSTEMS NOT DESCRIBED

Alternative systems not described here fall into three categories: (1) systems that are minor variations on a theme; (2) systems that have not succeeded in the experience of other agencies and programs; (3) systems whose costs or other requirements are far outside the range of the Technical Assistance Program.

Minor variations on a theme are exemplified by the question of how many TACs there should be. Ten? Five, serving larger regional aggregates? Fifty, one per state? Whereas the single national TAC seems to be a distinctive alternative to the present system; systems of five TACs or fifty TACs do not.

Entirely print-based technical assistance exemplifies an approach that has been less than successful in previous trials (most recently USOE's PIP experiment). The Panel does not describe an entirely print-based system because we don't believe that it would work.

The third category of alternatives, whose costs or other requirements are outside the range of the Technical Assistance Program, would include, for example, the Federal sponsorship of a Title I evaluation technical assistance specialist in each intermediate service agency (ISA or BOCES) or county office of education. This approach would be at least ten times as expensive as the present system.

SECTION VI

RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 OVERALL PURPOSE AND INTENT

The Panel is in full agreement that the technical assistance support and services developed by OED to support the Title I Evaluation and Reporting System (TIERS) is working and working well. The previous sections of this report have described the manner in which the Panel arrived at this conclusion and the findings on which it is based. The purpose of this section is one of fine tuning the program. There are some adjustments that the Panel believes would increase the quality of an already meritorious effort by OED. These recommendations cover just two of the four components of the Technical Assistance Program listed in Section I of this report, namely: (1) TACs, and (2) Printed Documents. Existing support activities by OED staff and national workshops should be continued as needed. These are viewed as support services, however, for what the Panel sees as the two components affecting SEA and LEA implementation of TIERS.

Section IV of this report is rich with suggestions provided by respondents or other sources of data. Almost every point made in Section IV could lead to a recommendation. A careful reading of that section may well lead to further adjustments of the Technical Assistance Program. The intent of the following recommendations, however, is to highlight what the Panel believes are the major actions that should be taken with the Title I evaluation Technical Assistance Program. These recommendations are based on all of the information available to the Panel as a result of its activities over the past six months and are endorsed by each Panel member. The recommendations are grouped as follows:

- Recommendations regarding TACs
  1. Continuation
  2. Scope of work
  3. Staffing
  4. Funding
  5. Federal management
- Recommendation regarding printed documents
- Recommendation regarding future systems.

6.2 RECOMMENDATIONS REGARDING TACS

6.2.1 CONTINUATION OF TACS

A. The Panel recommends that *OED continue to contract for technical assistance for Title I evaluation, following general procedures that were developed for and implemented in the establishment of the present TAC system.*

B. The Panel recommends further that *such contracting should be for a three-year cycle,* that is, one year contracts with provision for extension at the end of the first and second years if contractor performance is deemed to be acceptable.

The Panel recommends a three-year cycle in order to allow TACs to recruit and retain able staff, to provide stability to their technical assistance services and plans, to establish and maintain open channels of communication with their constituents, and to develop efficient and cost-effective methods of providing services. At the same time, a three-year limit will enable OED to review the Technical Assistance Program within a reasonable time with a view toward termination or decrease-enlargment to reflect the returns predicted from future efforts.

There is a continuing need for technical assistance for Title I evaluation and the implementation of new regulations may increase the future needs for assistance, especially in states that are not now implementing one of the models. However, there is widespread feeling among all respondent groups that the present system is working for most SEAs. This does not seem to be the time to implement major changes in the system.

C. For each HEW Region as presently defined, the Panel recommends that *regular Federal government competitive procurement procedures be followed to select a contractor to operate a TAC that will provide technical assistance to SEA and LEAs related to the evaluation of Title I program, i.e.:*

- *Eligible contractors should include all agencies and organizations permitted under Federal and state laws.*
- *In the instance of subcontractors or consortia, proposals should provide for some overall coordination and include the identification of a project director.*
- *Eligible contractors should be permitted to bid for more than one region. Separate management and cost figures should be submitted for each region for which the proposal is made.*

This recommendation essentially reaffirms the competitive procurement procedures followed in the first solicitation for contractors to operate TACs. The specific details are submitted to clarify issues that were mentioned by respondents to the Review Panel.

Although no attempt was made to comparatively evaluate the present TACs, we saw no evidence to exclude any types of organizations allowed under Federal and state laws or to prevent a potential contractor from bidding on more than one region.

The vast majority of SEA and LEA respondents indicated that the technical competence; interpersonal and instructional skills; and TAC staff knowledge of the idiosyncrasies of the LEAs, the SEAs, and the region were very important considerations in judging contractors. Some also felt that there was some advantage to having the TAC located close to them. The use of field offices or other mechanisms to provide closer geographic support could overcome this small, but nevertheless real problem. There was no clear evidence to suggest that a TAC necessarily be located in the region it serves.

6.2.2 SCOPE OF WORK FOR TACS

A. The Panel recommends *that the TACs be allowed to provide technical assistance services, as negotiated with each state, that assist in the development of increased capacity for Title I evaluation. Permissible areas of service should place more emphasis on technical assistance directed toward identifying strengths and weaknesses of individual programs for the purpose of improving them.*

The tone of the recommendation is permissive. The substance is that the TACs should assume a restructured role by assisting in formative evaluation and by developing a capacity of evaluation for the purpose of program improvement at both the state and local levels. The intent is to strike a more even balance between the Federal need for summative information secured through *reporting* and the local need for program improvement through Title I *evaluation*.

Two reasons argue for this view. First, the authors of the enabling legislation itself and the authors of more recent legislation presumably intended that the evaluations, enacted in response to the legislation, would provide needed information to audiences both at the local level and the Federal level (e.g., McLaughlin, 1975). Utility of the technical assistance program at the local level can be enhanced through increased attention to formative program evaluation in local Title I program. Second, the Panel is concerned about (1) the technical adequacy of the models, (2) the quality of data that can be collected other than on a controlled sampling basis, and (3) the meaning and utility of the aggregated data. These concerns are technical in nature and beyond the scope of the charge to the Panel, but do provide a rationale for change in the emphasis of technical assistance services. These concerns are shared by many of the respondents in this study as well as by many measurement and statistical experts.

The Panel *does not* recommend, and would not support, expanding the *reporting* requirements of LEAs or SEAs to include process evaluation or formative evaluation data.

B. A second recommendation affecting TAC Scope of Work concerns opportunities that should be provided to nurture the professionalism of TAC staff.

For the most part, the TAC staff members are extensively trained and experienced professionals in their technical areas. It is important that they receive the kind of stimulation and encouragement needed for continued professional growth. The Panel recommends that *each TAC place greater emphasis on staff development relevant to the provision of technical assistance for Title I evaluation.* The need for staff development is evidenced in SEA and TAC statements that field staff need to be indoctrinated in the TIERS system and in state and local idiosyncrasies before they begin making field contacts. Further, in order to retain the high quality staff they have recruited, TACs will have to provide opportunities for professional growth in the areas of contracted responsibilities.

Ways to reach this end include funding for attendance at national meetings, permission to engage in intra-TAC and inter-TAC research and committee work, opportunities for inservice training (perhaps at a central training site for TIERS instruction, coordinated by TACs) and direct receipt of communication about activities and policies related to the Title I evaluation Technical Assistance Program.

C. A third recommendation affecting TAC scope of work involves engagement in relevant research activities. The Panel recommends that *research relevant to Title I evaluation problems and issues be recognized as a permissible activity for TACs to undertake and that a certain proportion of TAC funding be earmarked for such research activities. Title I evaluation related activities that require a more specialized knowledge and expertise (e.g. data analysis, quality control of data) should also be permitted.*

Several TAC Directors and staff members expressed a desire that their role in research related to Title I evaluation problems and issues be clarified. There is a general opinion that TAC staffs include many competent, well trained researchers. Further, these people indicated that they were automatically involved in Title I evaluation problem identification through their work at the local level. The Panel recognizes that some relevant research is being conducted, as evidenced by the use of inter-TAC technical committees and by the presentations by TAC staff at professional meetings. Such work should be encouraged and allowed to continue, particularly in view of the evolutionary nature of Title I evaluation. Concern was voiced, though, about the legitimacy of such activity and of the opportunities for personal involvement. The intent of this recommendation is to alleviate these concerns and more formally recognize what should or should not be an activity within an overall technical assistance program. The Panel agrees, though, that TACs must remain primarily service organizations and secondarily research and development units.

6.2.3 STAFFING OF TACS

There was strong agreement among TAC, SEA, and LEA respondents that technical competence, interpersonal and instructional skills, and regional sensitivities were important attributes for a TAC staff member. Support was less clear for the apparent emphasis on a doctoral degree to be held by TAC staff members who deliver assistance in the field. There was no clear evidence nor agreement among respondents that full versus part-time employment offered differentiated advantages. What was important was the ready availability of competent TAC personnel, cognizant of state and local situations, who were able to communicate clearly, especially with nontechnical audiences.

There appeared to be no distinct advantages of the two basic staff assignment patterns (constant vs. changing staff assigned to a state) presently used by the TACs. Therefore it is recommended that *present procedures for staffing and staff deployment be left unchanged with the exception that, where warranted, suitable non-doctoral personnel be employed.*

The Panel believes that TACs should have the freedom to employ staff with the level and type of skills they feel they need, given their existing configuration of staff and state needs for their region. Attention should be given to (1) specializations of TAC personnel, (2) diversity of state needs, and (3) desires of the states for staff assignments.

6.2.4 FUNDING OF TACS

The Panel recommends that *the future funding of TACs be based on an equitable formula that includes a consideration of both regional size and regional need for technical assistance.*

The Panel notes that the TAC budgets for the present 15-month contract period range from as much as $1.7 million to as little as $175 thousand with no explicit rationale. While the present funding level of each TAC is undoubtedly based on regional size, need, or some other rationale, the rationale is not sufficiently explicit to provide assurance of equitable service across regions.

6.2.5 FEDERAL MANAGEMENT

In monitoring Federal programs of this size, it is common for the Project Officer to receive progress reports containing sufficient data to enable a quick review of the level of effort, including costs, for each of the major tasks. However, the Panel concurs with the action taken at the end of the first 15 month period deleting the monthly reports, and sees no reason to alter the present requirement for Quarterly Reports. Further, the requirement that such reports be submitted within the first half month following completion of a quarter appears to be reasonable and is causing no apparent difficulties in the field. These reports do provide a basis for response to the stated TAC need for more feedback from OED.

A. The Panel recommends that *uniform Quarterly Reports be submitted to the Project Officer within two weeks of the completion of each quarter, and OED provide timely feedback to each TAC following each Quarterly Report.*

B. A second management recommendation at the Federal level concerns cost recordkeeping. The Panel recommends that *OED establish a simple and uniform but informative system of cost/effort reporting for individual TACs so that the cost-efficiency of TAC services can be monitored and thereby improved.* Careful cost/effort monitoring is characteristic of well-managed Federal programs once they shift from developmental to operational status. In the case of the Technical Assistance Program, it may be that the original cost/effort reporting requirement was excessive for the newly established TACs. An informal policy of "give USOE as much management information as you can" has evolved and on a reduced (quarterly) schedule. At the present time, USOE receives uneven and often inadequate information on the actual cost per activity from individual TACs. Following the monitoring procedures of comparable programs in USOE and other agencies, a simple and uniform but informative system of cost/effort reporting should be established.

In the absence of uniform system wide, systematically collected cost effectiveness data, it is not possible to formulate specific recommendations regarding the use of different approaches (workshop, on-site consultation, telephone consultation, written consultation) for delivering assistance. TACs ought to be mindful of the operational efficiency of their procedures.

C. A third recommendation for management at the Federal level addresses coordination of activities under Section 183 of the 1976 Educational Amendments. The Panel recommends that *funding for technical assistance under Section 183(e) and funding for "jointly sponsored objective evaluation studies" conducted under Section 183(c) by SEAs be coordinated on a regional basis so that the differing needs of states within a region will be adequately met.* Some states do not use TAC services as much as other states because of their own capability and the complexity of the evaluation programs that state legislatures have mandated and that SEAs are attempting to implement. Such states may best be served by a combination of limited TAC service and supplementary funding to the SEA under Section 183(c).

D. A fourth recommendation for management at the Federal level concerns coordination of certain TAC activities. The Panel recommends that *steps be taken to enhance the capabilities of the TAC system through greater inter-TAC coordination.*

The TACs are largely a decentralized system. Tasks requiring either specialized expertise (e.g., work on technical issues) or consisting of repetitive elements (e.g., development of workshop support materials or involving inter-TAC communication) are most in need of a centralized scheme for coordination. The Panel notes with favor the use of inter-TAC committees on substantive issues and the assignment of specialized functions to individual TACs and encourages these and other mechanisms to promote the technical assistance capability throughout the entire system.

E. The final recommendation for management at the Federal level involves development and circulation of a reporting plan for TIERS. Because SEAs and LEAs are concerned about the use of data they are providing and because these concerns are related to requests for technical assistance, the Panel recommends that *OED prepare a plan for reporting and specification of the use of Title I data at the Federal level.* Such a plan would include at least the following: (1) content of reports, including comparisons to be made, statistics to be reported, breakdowns; (2) publication schedule; (3) distribution plans (audiences); and (4) intended uses. Such a plan should be circulated to appropriate audiences for commentary.

A theme that reappeared throughout the data gathering efforts of the Panel was concern for the form in which data would be reported and concern over the utility of the exercise. Although this cercern could be construed as a technical issue beyond the scope of the charge to the Panel,it does affect the Technical Assistance Program in two ways - it appears in the form of data management questions at the SEA level and it affects the relationship between TAC staff and personnel at the SEA and LEA levels. It is for these reasons that the Panel makes the above recommendation.

6.3. RECOMMENDATION REGARDING PRINTED DOCUMENTS

The Panel notes with favor a trend in some TACs away from intuitive, material creation efforts toward more systematic product development practices. It approves of inter-TAC cooperative material development work such as is being undertaken by the Committee on Uses of Data. It encourages the production and distribution of a manual, analogous to the Physician's Desk Reference, that would code in an easily retrievable manner and keep current information that state and local Title I evaluators most need to know.

The TACs are producing materials (e.g., test reviews, training materials) that have considerable value for Title I evaluation and beyond. By coordinating the collection, storage and retrieval, updating, and distribution of these products, OED could greatly enhance the technical assistance system. The TAC-RMC Materials Committee recommendations should be carefully considered in this regard. Thus, the Panel recommends that *printed documents be developed and managed in ways that enhance the quality and cost efficiency of the Technical Assistance Program.*

6.4 RECOMMENDATION REGARDING FUTURE SYSTEMS

The Panel recommends that *the Office of Education begin to investigate, during the period of the next contracts for Technical Assistance Centers, the possibility of a future system that has flexibility to accommodate to: the diversity of state and local capabilities and needs, and also the enlarged objectives of Title I evaluation technical assistance, particularly including the uses of evaluation for local program improvement and the strengthening of local evaluation capacity.*

In the Panel's opinion, the present system of TACs has enough technical merit and demonstrated success to continue as a model for the next contract period (although individual TACs may change as a result of the proposal competition). Concurrently, the Office of Education can carefully investigate alternative systems that supplant or (in the case of a pluralistic model) supplement the present system. On the one hand, it would be surprising to find that the TAC approach has been entirely abandoned in the Technical Assistance Program of 1983. On the other hand, it would be equally surprising to find that the TAC approach has not evolved by then into a more flexible and probably more complex system.

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APPENDIX A
INTERVIEW GUIDES

A.1 TAC Site Visit Guide: Topic Outline

Information for TAC Staff[1]
- Charge of the Review Panel
- Design for the Review

Characterization of the Needs of the Region

TAC Staff
- Characteristics
- Utilization

TAC Activities (Nature; FTEs; Costs) (1977-78; 1978-79)
- Organization and Management
- Field Activities
- Special Research/Development
- Other Activities

Contracts and Agreements
- USOE Contracts
  - Scope of Work
  - Exceptions
  - Monitoring
- SEA Agreements

Relationships Between this TAC and:
- USOE
  - Washington
  - Regional Offices
- SEAs
- LEAs
- Other TACs

Impact (Actual, Potential)
- Congress and USOE
- SEAs
- LEAs
- Professional Field
- Other Audiences

Looking Ahead
- Improving the TACs
- Design of a Technical Assistance System
- Impact of Proposed Federal Regulations

Additional Comments

[1]To be provided by Review Panel member; the other information is to be provided by TAC staff.

A.2 SEA Interview Guide: Topic Outline

Information for SEA Staff[2]
Title I Evaluation Models and Proposed Regulations
Title I Evaluation Needs of State
TACs
Printed Materials
Relationship with Other Agencies (OE, LEAs)
Impact (Actual, Potential)
Looking Ahead
Additional Comments

A.3 LEA Interview Guide

Do you have any concerns about Title I evaluation?
Have you received any technical assistance with respect to Title I evaluation:
  If yes - who helped you?
    what kinds of help did you get?
    did the help meet your needs?
  If external evaluator listed, probe co-option as a possible problem.
Who should be delivering technical assistance for Title I evaluation?
Spelling of name and appropriate title.

A.4 External Evaluator Interview Guide

How many districts do you serve?
Briefly, what kind of help do you provide?
Are external evaluators the best way to provide Title I evaluation technical assistance? Do you see any dangers using external evaluators?
How do you answer the criticism that LEAs use external evaluators to provide positive assessments?
Are you familiar with TACs? If yes, what is your opinion of them?
Spelling of name and appropriate name of their "Corporation" and its address.

A.5 Test Publisher Interview Guide

What have you done or plan to do to accommodate to the regulations for Title I evaluations?
What concerns do you have about Title I evaluations? How can it best be done and how can the publishers be of service in this regard?
To what extent do your reps serve as consultants to LEAs regarding Title I evaluations; what are their qualifications as evaluation consultants?

[2]To be provided by Review Panel member; the other information is to be provided by SEA staff.

APPENDIX B

NUMBER OF INTERVIEWEES[1]

B.1 SEA Interviewees by Regions

Region I	10
Region II	10
Region III	7
Region IV	14
Region V	15
Region VI	16
Region VII	10
Region VIII	8
Region IX	10
Region X	5

B.2 LEA Interviewees by Location

East	14
Midwest	27
West	10

B.3 Federal Government Interviewees

Legislative Aides	3
OED	10
Other USOE	3

B.4 Other Interviewees

Test Publishers	5
External Evaluators	5
RMC Research Corporation	3
Parent Organization	3

[1]Does not include TAC staff.

APPENDIX C

RELATED DOCUMENTS
(NOT ALREADY LISTED AS REFERENCES)

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APPENDIX D

ESTIMATED BREAKDOWN OF TAC EFFORT AND COST

The problem in this analysis was to disaggregate the 87% of TAC effort devoted to technical assistance and to show, if possible, the amount of effort given to workshops, on-site consultations, question-answering via telephone and correspondence, etc. Given that uniform reporting of effort across TACs is not available, the Panel opted for a procedure that became one of filling a systemwide effort matrix with whatever data happened to be reported by each TAC (see Table 3.4), then of computing budget-adjusted activity estimates for a hypothetical TAC whose budget falls at the median for all ten TACs.

Table D.1 shows most of the activity data that can be gained from 1978 Quarterly Reports without attempting to guess the amount of activity implied by aggregated references (e.g., "several workshops")[1]. Limited confidence should be placed in the counts obtained for some TACs, particularly counts based on narrative references. However, the median activity level across all reporting TACs probably approximates the true median.

Because a 10:1 funding difference exists across the TACs, with a high of $1.7 million in the 15-month budget of one TAC and a low of $175 thousand in the 15-month budget of another TAC, activity levels become more comparable across the TACs when we weight the activity by the ratio of each TAC's budget to the median TAC budget. The resulting budget-adjusted activity estimates tend to bracket their medians more closely than the unadjusted estimates, and in several cases TACs with widely varying budgets are shown to engage in the same amount of activity "per dollar".

[1]Table D.1 was derived from TAC Quarterly Reports, as were the tables reported in Section III. Estimates given in Table D.1 differ from those in the Section III tables for several reasons:

a. Tables in Section III used data equally from the first three Quarterly Reports for 1978. Table D.1 uses data primarily from the Second Quarterly Report (April-June).

b. Table 3.2 reports percentage of person-effort given to technical assistance based on total person-days <u>minus</u> management, whereas the percentage of person-effort given to technical assistance in Table D.1 is based on <u>total</u> person-days including management, hence is lower.

c. In Table 3.3 a workshop lasting, for example, two days is counted as one workshop. In Table D.1 it is counted as two workshops.

The tabulations in Section III and this appendix were performed separately as a check on reliability. Despite inadvertent differences in procedure, the separate tabulations essentially corroborate each other.

Table D.1 Amounts of Technical Assistance and Other TAC Activities Indicated by Quarterly Reports

TAC Code:	F	E	A	C	H	D	J	B	I	G	Median
TAC budget as percentage of median TAC budget ($86 thousand per quarter)	300%	70	400	40	90	110	110	90	110	80	
Percentage of total person-effort devoted to technical assistance	-	-	87	-	-	89	-	87	85	77	87
Number of budget-adjusted person-days devoted to technical assistance	-	-	300	-	-	380	-	355	255	270	300
Number of workshop days per quarter	15	35	70	20	25	25	15	25	10	25	25
Number of workshop days, budget-adjusted	5	50	20	50	30	25	15	30	10	30	27.5
Number of consultation days per quarter	100	25	140	-	10	45	20	45	30	10	30
Number of consultation days, budget-adjusted	35	35	35	-	10	40	20	50	30	10	35
Number of telephone contacts	-	-	620	-	100	270	190	160	160	140	160
Telephone contacts, budget-adjusted	-	-	155	-	110	245	175	180	145	175	175
Number of correspndence contacts	-	-	415	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Correspondence contacts, budget-adjusted	-	-	105	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Staff training, person-days	-	-	60	-	-	30	-	20	25	20	30
Staff training, budget-adjusted	-	-	15	-	-	25	-	20	25	25	25
National system activity, person-days	-	-	-	-	10	15	-	5	5	5	5
National system activity, budget-adjusted	-	-	-	-	10	15	-	5	5	5	5

Note: Notes concerning this table appear on the next page.

NOTES CONCERNING TABLE D.1

TAC budget. The median budget and associated percentages are computed within the $6.07 million originally budgeted for January 1978 through March 1979.

Percentage of person-effort devoted to technical assistance. In obtaining the values for this row, an effort was made to eliminate clerical effort from the original person by task data drawn from the TAC reports.

Budget-adjusted person-days. The number of person-days that a TAC devoted per quarter to technical assistance was weighted by the ratio of the TAC's budget to the median TAC budget, which was $86 thousand per quarter. These budget-adjusted person-days are therefore estimates of the technical assistance person-days that a TAC would be expected to expend if its budget fell at the median.

Number of workshop and consultation days. Each successive day of a multiple-day workshop or consultation was counted as another workshop or consultation whenever the reports made such information available. Thus, the number of workshop and consultation days reported in Table D.1 is greater than or equal to the actual number of workshops and consultations conducted.

Number of telephone contacts. Some TACs reported telephone contacts only with the states in their service regions. The reports of other TACs showed that about half of all calls involve the states and half involve other TACs, Washington, test publishers, consultants, etc. If a TAC reported telephone contacts with the states only, this number was doubled to provide an estimate of all telephone activity.

Staff training. Entries in this row are derived from Task 3 of the cost breakdowns provided in five cases and from narrative descriptions of the training activities.

National system activity. Entries in this row are derived from narrative descriptions of the committee work and other national responsibilities of staff.

Estimate rounding. To acknowledge imprecision in the data, all activity counts and days are rounded to the nearest 5.

From Table D.1 emerges the profile of a hypothetical TAC whose budget falls at the 1978 median of $86 thousand per quarter. In a given quarter this TAC expends about 345 person-days of effort, of which 300 (87%) are devoted to technical assistance and the remaining 45 (13%) to staff training management and all other tasks. The 345 person-days cost about $250 per day; the average person-year cost of about $60 thousand is higher than the average person-year cost of other Federal education contracts (ca. $50 thousand), but not as much higher as might be predicted from the nature of the work which includes extensive travel.

Our hypothetical TAC engages in about 25-30 days of workshops each quarter. It engages in about 35 on-site consultation days. It deals with about 175 telephone contacts and about 100 correspondence contacts.

Reviewing these totals of 25-30 workshop days, 35 consultation days, 175 telephone contacts and 100 correspondence contacts, one may ask how the 300 person-days of technical assistance effort are spread across the activities. We can also ask how these person-days are divided between client/audience *contact* and TAC staff *preparation*. The cost of the various technical assistance services is also of interest. At this point the Panel would have to go beyond the data contained in TAC reports. No further data analysis is possible.

The Panel recognizes that the estimates stated in this subsection may be less than accurate. We do believe, however, that analyses of TAC effort and cost, using more system-wide and detailed data than available to the Panel, can be of value in clarifying the operation of the Technical Assistance Program and in indicating the effort/cost range with which alternative forms of technical assistance would have to compete.

APPENDIX E

TECHNICAL ISSUES SURROUNDING THE MODELS

E.1 Presentation of Problems

The evaluation models developed for Title I evaluation were designed to provide a clear answer to the question "How much more did pupils learn by participating in the Title I project than they would have learned without it?" (Tallmadge and Wood, 1976) Each of the three models and their variations are designed to compare observed performance with an estimate of what performance would have been without Title I support. They differ in method used to estimate the no-treatment performance.

Although the present Performance Review was focused on the provision of technical assistance, many respondents made comments about the models themselves, i.e., the content of the assistance. As with other evaluation models, criticisms have been made since the inception of TIERS. Some of these have been addressed, others are currently being addressed, while still others require further research and development. The comments made, however, reflect the perceptions of the models now, regardless of any efforts to address the issues raised. To evaluate the validity of these issues, most of which are technical in nature, is beyond the charge of the Panel. The list below is provided only to present the issues as seen in the field at the present time.

E.1.1 Perceived Problems with Model A

No basis for the assumption that norm-referenced standing will be maintained in the no-treatment condition.

Good reason to expect positively biased estimates due to regression effect.

The Title I group and the norm group may be so dissimilar that the latter is not a relevant comparison.

Equating normed and non-normed tests in order to use the non-normed tests is inappropriate.

E.1.2 Perceived Problems with Model B

Random assignment is seldom feasible and violates the principle of providing Title I services to the children with the greatest need.

The control of treatment conditions is not in the hands of the Title I evaluator.

Subjective basis for deciding whether a comparison group is enough like the Title I group to justify comparisons. Guarantee of similarity is virtually impossible. Tallmadge and Wood acknowledge that large differences are likely to invalidate the model.

The cost of using a non-Title I group in data collection is high.

E.1.3 Perceived Problems with Model C

Not feasible when data for the non-Title I comparison group cannot be obtained.

Indirect benefits can accrue to the non-Title I comparison group which would lead to the underestimation of Title I effects.

The cost of using a non-Title I group in data collection is high.

Can only be used when participants identified *solely* on the basis of their pretest scores. This only happens in a small subset of projects.

Validity depends on meeting the assumption of linearity.

E.1.4 Perceived Problems Across Models

The mold of measured achievement vs. expected achievement is much too confining. It represents one narrow perspective on evaluation. The models do not attend to instructional activities in Title I; this is important at the LEA and SEA levels.

Sole reliance on norm-referenced achievement tests. They cannot be expected to be sensitive to the idiosyncratic effects of specific projects.

Lay audiences cannot understand, and will not use, NCEs.

The validity of the assumption that aggregation of achievement differences across projects that employ different tests assumes that the NCEs will be comparable regardless of the tests or models used to measure impact, subject matter in Title I projects, and age or grade level of students being measured. This assumption is not supportable.

The testing time required for administration of three standardized tests per year is unwieldy and taxing.

There is no plan for use of the aggregated data at any level - Federal, state, or local.

The models require new testing procedures that cannot be supported educationally by some LEAs.

There is no way to isolate Title I students from students receiving other services from such funded programs as, Bilingual, Native American Indian, State Compensatory Education, etc.

Problems of data quality control look to be quite large.

APPENDIX F

CHARACTERIZATION OF VARIABILITY OF SEAs

The most obvious difference among states is size, in terms of numbers of students served. The quantity of LEAs, however, is not directly related to state size. Of concern to many SEA respondents is the number of small versus large LEAs within their state. Most SEA respondents are more "concerned" about their smaller LEAs (feeling that major metropolitan LEAs will get along by themselves).

A few SEAs have large intermediate units (ISDs) between themselves and their LEAs. In only a few cases do these ISDs provide a service function to LEAs in the area of technical assistance for Title I. Most SEAs deal directly with all their LEAs.

SEAs differ greatly in their internal administrative structures. In some states, there are evaluators within the Title I office; in many others, that is not the case. Some differences of opinion about TIERS seem to be related to these administrative differences.

Most SEAs have one or less FTE for Title I evaluation. But, a few states have many more. Some states have Title I evaluators with considerable training and experience in evaluation/research/measurement. But, the Title I evaluators in many other states do not have formal training in these areas.

State respondents differ dramatically in their perceptions of the place of evaluation in Title I. Many SEA respondents are convinced of the importance of evaluation, both for themselves and for their LEAs. But, *many* others see Title I evaluation as a "requirement of the Feds to be gotten out of the way as expeditiously as possible".

Some SEA respondents fear Federal control and are suspicious of TIERS along with other programs from Washington. But, *many* others feel that the "control" safeguards for TIERS are strong and are working. SEAs differ in the degree to which they mandate LEA activities for Title I versus leaving decision making at the LEA level. No obvious relationship appeared between SEAs who decry USOE control and their attitude toward LEA independence of SEA control.

The characteristic of SEAs which seems to be most common across all 50 states is a belief in their own uniqueness; "our problems are different from other states".

APPENDIX G

BACKGROUND DISCUSSION CONCERNING ALTERNATIVE SYSTEMS FOR DELIVERY OF TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

G.1 Guiding theory

The Panel assumed that the communication functions of alternative systems should be directed toward new practices, not solely new knowledge, and that the guiding theory should be one of communication and change, not communication and knowledge. A social theory that encompasses communication and change is diffusion theory, notably as in its formulation by Rogers with Shoemaker in The Communication of Innovations (1971). Main elements of the diffusion theory include:

- o A time-based adoption process incorporating a knowledge phase, a persuasion phase, a trial phase, a decision phase, and a confirmation phase
- o Attributes of innovations that facilitate or impede their adoption
- o Attributes of innovators, early adopters, later adopters, and "laggards"
- o The concept of opinion leadership and a distinction between the innovator and opinion-leader roles
- o Multistep flow of informational and persuasive communication
- o Attributes of communication channels that mediate their effectiveness for knowledge, persuasion, trial, decision, and confirmation
- o A taxonomy of decisions ranging from private individual decisions to public collective decisions.

In diffusion theory, communication moves people from one phase of the adoption process to the next and also consolidates the effects of the previous phases. In the field of education, diffusion theory has been interpreted by Havelock (1974), Butler and Paisley (1975), and others as the foundation of a dissemination process whose purpose is to:

- inform educators of alternative practices,
- assist them in assessing current practices versus alternatives,
- persuade them of the superiority either of current practice or of some alternative,
- equip them for decision-making,
- reinforce a decision once it is made, and
- guide, from experimental to operational status, any practice which is new to a locale.

G.2 Other communication programs in education

Since the passage of the National Defense Education Act in 1958, dissemination has been a mandated function of Federal education agencies. The USOE/NIE Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC) came into existence under provisions of Title VII of NDEA and Title IV of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965. ERIC is now a system of 16 decentralized information clearinghouses and 4 centralized processing and management centers. About 300 thousand documents and journal articles are indexed and abstracted or annotated in the ERIC data base; users can obtain microfiche or paper copies of ERIC's noncopyrighted holdings at nominal cost.

Whereas ERIC functions as a neutral source of all kinds of educational information, another print-based program, USOE's Project Information Packages (PIP), seeks to increase adoption of exemplary projects in, for example, compensatory education and bilingual education. PIP provides a potential adopter (school district) with a set of interrelated workbooks on planning, implementation, management evaluation, etc.

Because print-based programs like ERIC and even PIP have limited ability to change educational practice by themselves, USOE and NIE have begun experimental programs using field agents or "linkers" whose functions are modeled on the county agents of the Department of Agriculture's Cooperative Extension Service. USOE's National Diffusion Network, (NDN), which links "developer/demonstrators" of nearly 200 exemplary projects and "state facilitators" of 48 states to local educators, and NIE's Research and Development Utilization Program, which provides linkage to 240 districts in 18 states, exemplify the interpersonal approach in general dissemination programs. Special purpose interpersonal programs include the Regional Resource Centers of USOE's Bureau of Education for the Handicapped (16 centers providing assistance to state and local education agencies in implementing Public Law 94-142), Race Desegregation Assistance Centers of USOE's Division of Technical Assistance (15 centers serving state and local education agencies), Sex Desegregation Assistance Centers (10 centers), National Origin Desegregation Assistance Centers (9 centers), and the National Learning Disabilities Assistance Project of USOE's Bureau of Education for the Handicapped (1 national technical assistance center serving 53 Child Service Demonstration Centers).

The interpersonal approach is also manifest in the teacher centers movement. Teacher centers appeal to educators because of their "each one teach one" philosophy of teacher training and their belief that locally developed teaching resources are as valid as those developed in national R&D programs.

Butler and Paisley (1978) analyzed the roles of linkers in several of the USOE/NIE programs cited above. Three modal roles were apparent:

- The "resource finder", who conducts information searches to find answers to clients' questions
- The "process helper", who facilitates problem analysis, decision making, group process, and conflict resolution in the client organization

- The "solution giver", who advocates a particular product, strategy, or other solution to clients' problems (In technical assistance programs the role of "instructor" is added to these three.)

Some communication programs of the 1970s have been based on the presumable cost-effectiveness of audiovisual media. Regional laboratories, university research divisions, state education agencies, and others have produced films, videotapes, audiocassettes, etc., dealing with new educational practices. However, arrangements for distribution have been poor, and the potential of media in educational communication remains largely untested.

G.3 Differences in organization, service, focus, and other factors combined

Butler and Paisley (1975) catalogued more than 40 "models" of educational communication for the National Institute of Education. Models were contrasted on these dimensions:

Level:	National, regional, state, local
Base:	Government-centralized, government-decentralized, consortium, professional association, university, private non-profit organization
Service:	Information, technical assistance, instructional materials, continuing education
Focus:	General, subject-specific, product-specific, audience-specific
Interface:	Print, media, interpersonal
Initiative:	Client (demand services), staff (scheduled services)

One important finding of the national survey of communication programs conducted by Butler and Paisley is that similar services can be provided by programs differing in both level and base but that the level and base for a communication program may be determined less by the technical requirements of the service to be provided than by clients' views of credibility or legitimacy.

G.4 Dissemination principles from a recent synthesis of studies

Emrick and Peterson (1978) prepared a synthesis of five recent dissemination studies, under contract to the National Institute of Education. The studies included evaluations of the National Diffusion Network, the Project Information Packages experiment, and the Pilot State Dissemination Project, among others. The Emrick-Peterson synthesis concludes with a list of dissemination principles derived from the studies. We present the list of principles below, although unfortunately space does not permit a summary of the evidence and discussion that Emrick and Peterson provide for each principle.

G.4.1 Meaningful change occurs as a process, not as an event.

"There are two separate but parallel dimensions to this change process: a *personal* dimension which involves the change process occurring within individuals (cognitive, behavioral, affective) as they acquire and make use of new knowledge, and a *systemic* dimension which involves the concomitant changes occurring in (their) environment (organizational, social, political). A third dimension which serves to guide and facilitate the utilization process will be referred to as *technical support*. This dimension consists of the information, materials, and resources, as well as the people (linkers, change agents ... technical assistance groups, etc.) that are external to the (school) environment but are involved in the change process." (p. 53)

G.4.2 Direct personal intervention is by far the most potent technical support resource and may be a necessary condition for many forms of utilization.

Direct personal intervention serves to initiate the utilization process, to link users with the most appropriate new knowledge and products, and to guide and reassure users at key points in the utilization process.

Direct intervention should be distributed over a considerable period of time (two or more years), with more frequent contacts during initial stages. Contacts should focus on key administrative and instructional opinion leaders.

On-site assistance invariably involves more than communicating the technical and procedural details regarding the use of new knowledge and practices. "The training or skill development is nearly always accomplished by means of guided experience ... learning by doing. The use of modeling and over-the-shoulder techniques is common." (p. 62)

G.4.3 Continuous personal participation of the implementing staff is needed to firmly root and sustain the utilization.

"Evidence from the ... studies provides very strong support for the conclusion that effective assistance strategies recognize and interact with variations in the client's state of use. (This principle stands in contrast to) the familiar 'top down' approach, which assumes that change can be imposed by administrative fiat. [Change] efforts succeed only if the implementing staff are predisposed to the change and are provided with resources, personal support, and professional incentives to carry out the implementation." (pp. 67-69)

G.4.4 Administrators occupy a crucial role in supporting the utilization process.

"All of the studies in this synthesis point to the crucial role administrators play in setting change priorities, establishing incentives and conditions conducive to utilization, and providing leadership and support throughout the process." (p. 70)

G.4.5 Material resources at the "how to" level are needed, particularly for utilizations involving organizational or instructional changes.

"The general term 'materials' (refers to) three different categories. *Descriptive* materials include printed matter, visual displays, and other forms of information designed to communicate what the new knowledge, product, or practice is and how it can be used. ... The second category of materials is defined as *instructional* - those workbooks, texts, audiovisual sequences, and other central elements of the curriculum which make up the content of education. ... The third category of materials is made up of various technological and (other) components which are adjunct to and occupy a background or *support* role in the utilization.

G.5 Guidelines for dissemination

In addition to these principles, Emrick and Peterson suggest 13 guidelines for an effective dissemination/utilization program. To be maximally effective, a dissemination strategy would:

G.5.1 Identify and gain access to clients by means of the personal referral networks and informal communication channels existing within the client social system.

G.5.2 Use in-person (preferably face-to-face) communications, with accompanying "hard copy" materials.

G.5.3 Attend to and differentiate the organizational/bureaucratic nature of the client (school) system.

G.5.4 Target the primary level of entry at the organizational level most proximate to the intended locus of impact.

(Translation:) "Information and assistance intended for teachers should be targeted to teachers - not administrators - and vice versa."

G.5.5 Provide for and secure prior informed concurrence of all administrative levels above the level of primary interface.

G.5.6 Make use of change agents, interventionists, linkers, facilitators, intermediaries, assistance groups, advocates (or whatever their title!) who are most similar to the target clientele.

G.5.7 Ensure that all transactions between the intermediary and the client are coherent and coordinated with the general goals of the dissemination program.

"The assumption that the target clientele understand problems and shortcomings of a dissemination effort is both false and disastrous in its consequences. The intermediary is an alien to the (social system of the target clientele)."

G.5.8 Provide opportunities for choice in the content and style of target group involvement.

G.5.9 Focus on a limited number of clients, at least 25 percent fewer than can be "comfortably" accommodated at any one time.

"Maximizing the ratio of successes to involvements will enhance the legitimacy of the effort. Firmly rooting the utilization will generate an advocate of the system - the well-served client."

G.5.10 Place early emphasis on the philosophy and ideology of the information, products, or services being disseminated.

"To the extent that the consciousness of the clients can be raised and the professional and personal advantages identified, a sense of enthusiasm and motivation will emerge among clients."

G.5.11 Make early use of concrete experiences, assignments, materials, and utilization-relevant activities.

G.5.12 Provide repeated in-person transactions with the client staff.

"One-shot or 'hit and run' transactions will not produce sustained utilization."

G.5.13 Anticipate that utilizations involving some form of implementation process will be gradual and cumulative.

"Nearly all studies show that two or more years are required before any new practice or procedure stablizes. The first year is usually a period of becoming familiar with the mechanics - the 'what, when, and how.' Subsequent years involve internalization, accommodation, refinement, and further diffusion. The process is slow and requires rather continuous attention and support at the early stages. As the local staff gain experience with new procedures, external support can be withdrawn gradually."